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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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Crorepati Kejri not so 'Aam Aadmi' anymore

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

BJP on Monday claimed that a CAG report raised 139 questions related to former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's previous Flagstaff Road residence and "exposed his "black deeds". No immediate reaction was available from AAP on the charges. Addressing a press conference, the BJP's Delhi president Virendra Sachdeva said the report of 2022 cited an expenditure of Rs 33.86 crore on the "Sheesh Mahal" but the actual cost was far higher. "This report pertains to expenditure till 2022. There is no revelation on expenses of 2023 and 2024 and, according to our information, the real cost runs up to Rs 75-80 crore if the inventory of the items in the bungalow are included," he claimed. *—PTI*

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Jarkiholi eyes CM seat in 2028 polls

BELAGAVI, 6 JAN

Public Works Department Minister Satish Jarkiholi, representing the Yamakanamaradi constituency in Belagavi district, has expressed his aspirations to be the leading candidate for the Chief Minister's post from his party after the 2028 Assembly elections. Addressing reporters in Raichur on Monday, Jarkiholi affirmed that the current Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah, would serve his full term, dismissing any specu-lation about a leadership change. "Siddaramaiah's government has managed to implement guarantee schemes worth crores without borrowing a single rupee," Jarkiholi stated. He further emphasized that the state treasury was in dire condition when the party assumed power, ousting the Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government in 2023.

—Salar News

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Aero India to be held from 10-14 February

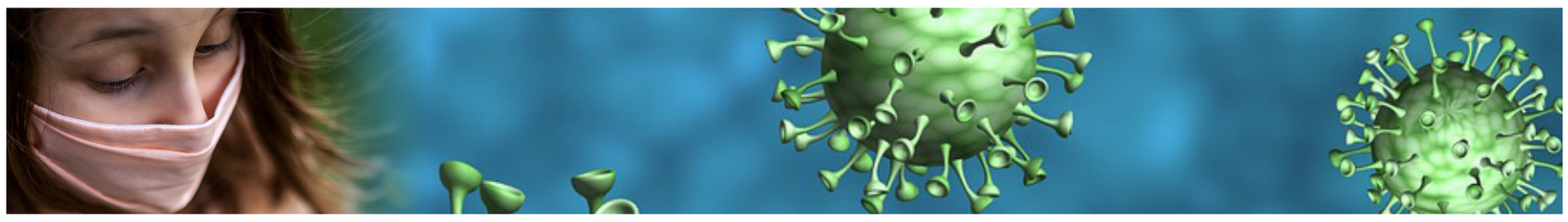
NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

India's biennial aerospace exhibition Aero India will be held in Yelahanka on the outskirts of Bengaluru from 10-14 February with an aim to project the country as a defence manufacturing hub. The event will include both air displays and static exhibitions of a large array of military platforms from the aerospace sector, the defence ministry said on Monday. "With the broad theme 'The Runway to a Billion Opportunities', the event will provide a platform for forging partnerships between foreign and Indian firms and the discovery of newer avenues in the global value chain. The first three days of the event will be business days while 13 and 14 have been set as public days to allow people to witness the show.*—PTI*

Indian nurse's case handled by Houthis: Yemeni embassy

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

The capital punishment handed to Indian nurse Nimisha Priya by a Yemeni court has not been ratified by President Rashad al-Alimi, the West Asian nation's embassy said on Monday. The embassy issued the clarification to a media outlet following its report on the case. The Yemeni government emphasises that the entire case has been handled by the Houthi militias, and therefore, Rashad Al-Alimi, Chairman of the Presidential Leadership Council, Yemen has not ratified this judgment, the mission said. Priya, hailing from Kollengode in Kerala's Palakkad district, has been found guilty of murdering a Yemeni citizen in July, 2017. Last week, India said it is closely following the developments in the case.*—PTI*



Mask up! HMPV reaches B'luru

2 infants found positive in City; Govt lays out precautionary measures

BENGALURU/CHENNAI/ NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Five infants tested positive for the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in Bengaluru, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat on Monday, the first reported cases of the virus in India.

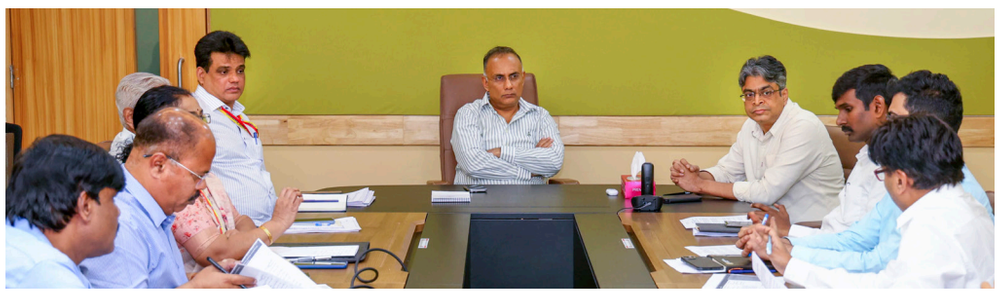
Following the two cases in Bengaluru, Karnataka government issued an advisory, urging citizens to avoid going to public places if they're symptomatic and to wear masks in crowded areas to reduce the risk of transmission.

Karnataka asked people not to panic, noting that the infections that have been detected are by virus strains that are not life-threatening.

A three-month-old female infant with a history of bronchopneumonia was diagnosed with HMPV after being admitted to Baptist Hospital in Bengaluru. She has already been discharged, the ministry said.

An eight-month-old male infant with a history of bronchopneumonia tested positive for HMPV on 3 Jan-uary after being admitted to Baptist Hospital. He is now recovering, it said.

Neither of the patients has any history of international travel, it further said.



Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao chairs a meeting Bengaluru *PHOTO: PTI*

In Chennai, officials only confirmed two cases of HMPV have been detected but did not immediately divulge any details.

The fifth case was reported from Gujarat's Ahmedabad. A two-month-old boy admitted to a private hospital in the city tested positive for HMPV. The infant, who hails from Dungarpur in Rajasthan, was hospi-talised on 24 December, 2024, with symptoms of respiratory infection.

Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, who chaired a meeting of Health Department officials said there was no need to panic as the infections that have been detected are by old virus strains that exist in the country and they are not life-threatening.

He also said the two infected infants are doing "normal", and advised people to follow general precau-tionary measures.

Karnataka urged people not to panic as the virus is not as transmissible as Covid.

Emphasising that the respiratory virus primarily affects children, causing infections similar to the common cold, the Directorate of Medical Education (DME) said hospitals have been instructed to report influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) cases.

Media reports that cases detected at Bengaluru's private hospital are the first HMPV cases reported in the country are incorrect, Rao said.

The Union government said that a case of HMPV was detected in a six-month-old baby in Kolkata in November, highlighting that the virus has been in circulation for a while now.

Rao said the virus was first detected in 2001 in the Netherlands, though they may have existed earlier too.

Rao said the outbreak of HMPV in China is said to involve a new variant.

There is no need for Covid like protocols to be followed as of now as there have been no "unnatural de-velopments" so far, he said. If there is a need for such protocols, the Centre will decide when such a situation arises, he added. Union Health Minister JP Nadda sought to assuage fears, saying the government is closely monitoring the situation and there is no reason to worry.*—PTI*

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SENSEX SLUMPS 1,250 PTS ON HMPV SCARE

MUMBAI, 6 JAN

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty crashed 1.6 per cent on Monday due to an across-the-board selloff, as concerns over third-quarter earnings growth and the continued flight of foreign capital sapped risk appetite.

Besides, traders said that the new HMPV scare, depreciating rupee and weak trend in Asian markets fur-ther weighed on sentiment.

Extending loss for the second straight session, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 1,258.12 points or 1.59 per cent to close below the 78,000 level at 77,964.99. *—PTI*

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Old habit of blaming neighbours: India to Pak on Afghan strike

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

India on Monday unequivocally condemned Pakistani air strikes in Afghanistan that killed many civilians and said it is Islamabad's old practice to blame its neighbours for its "internal failures".

Pakistan carried out air strikes in certain areas in Afghanistan on 24 December claiming to target terror-ist outfit Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The Taliban regime said at least 46 civilians were killed in the air strikes by the Pakistan military.

"We have noted the media reports on airstrikes on Afghan civilians, including women and children, in which several precious lives have been lost," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"We unequivocally condemn any attack on innocent civilians," he said.

Following the air strikes, the Taliban regime said the Pakistan military's "aggression" against Afghanistan amounted to a violation of sovereignty of the country. *—PTI*

Official Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs Randhir Jaiswal *PHOTO: PTI*

Canada PM Trudeau quits amid dissent

TORONTO, 6 JAN

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation Monday in the face of rising discon-tent over his leadership, and after the abrupt departure of his finance minister signalled growing turmoil within his government.

Trudeau said it had become clear to him that he cannot "be the leader during the next elections due to internal battles." He planned to stay on as prime minister until a new leader of the Liberal Party is cho-sen.

An official familiar with the matter said Parliament, which had been due to resume 27 January, will be suspended until 24 March.

The timing will allow for a Liberal Party leadership race.

All three main opposition parties have said they plan to topple the Liberal Party in a no-confidence vote when Parliament resumes, so a spring election to pick a permanent replacement was almost assured.

Trudeau came to power in 2015 after 10 years of Conservative Party rule, and had initially been hailed for returning the country to its liberal past. But the 53-year-old scion of one of Canada's most famous prime ministers became deeply unpopular with voters in recent years over a range of issues, including the soaring cost of food and housing, and surging immigration.

I am a fighter but if I'm having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option in that election
—Justin Trudeau, Canadian Prime Minister

The political upheaval comes at a difficult moment for Canada internationally. US President-elect Donald Trump has threatened to impose 25 per cent tariffs on all Canadian goods.

Trudeau had kept publicly mum in recent weeks, despite intensifying pressure for him to step down.

Canada's former finance minister, Chrystia Freeland, announced her resignation from Trudeau's Cabinet on 16 December., criticising some of Trudeau's economic priorities. The move, came shortly after the housing minister quit.

Freeland and Trudeau had disagreed about a temporary sales tax holiday on goods ranging from children's clothes to beer, and plans to send every citizen a check for $250 Canadian ($174). *—PTI*

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'THE BRUTALIST' DOMINATES GOLDEN GLOBES

Hollywood on Sunday arrived at Beverly Hills, California, to celebrate the best of 2024 at the 82nd Golden Globes. The awards honour excellence in television and films and was hosted by comedian Nikki Glaser, marking the 1st time a woman is solo-hosting the show. Here are the big winners:

- **Best actress in a film:** Fernanda Torres, 'I'm Still Here'
- **Best film:** 'The Brutalist'
- **Best Director (film):** Brady Corbet, 'The Brutalist'
- **Best TV series:** 'Shogun'

>>>More on Page 6

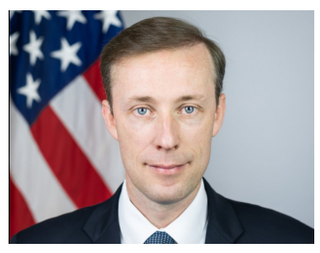
Best actor in a film: Adrien Brody, 'The Brutalist'

US to end restrictions on Indian nuclear entities: Sullivan

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

The United States is finalising measures to remove long-standing regulations that have hindered civil nucclear collaboration between major Indian and American firms, accord-ing to US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. This significant announcement followed talks with India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.

The India-US civil nuclear partnership, initiated in 2005 during then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's meeting with President George W Bush, was formalised in 2008 but had seen little concrete progress since then. Sullivan noted the vision set forth by Bush and Singh has yet to be fully realised, stating, "It is time to take the next major step in cementing this partnership."



Jake Sullivan *PHOTO: X*

He confirmed that the US is finalising the removal of regulations that have restricted cooperation be-tween India's leading nuclear entities and American companies, allowing those previously on restricted lists to engage in substantial collaboration. Sullivan referred to this step as a "statement of confidence" in the evolving relationship between the two nations.

Additionally, he announced an upcoming boost to the India-US commercial and civil space partnership, which is expected to enhance missile technology cooperation. Sullivan also addressed concerns over China's "predatory industrial strategies," emphasising that both nations are strengthening their supply chains and technological resilience in light of global challenges.

He concluded by reaffirming the importance of India-US collaboration for peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, underscoring an enduring commitment to mutual security and prosperity. *—PTI*

18 trapped as water enters 'rat hole' Assam mine

GUWAHATI, 6 JAN

Around 18 labourers are feared trapped after water entered a "rat hole" mine in Assam today. The 300-foot-deep coal mine is located in Umrangso, a remote industrial town in Dima Hasao district.

Water has reached about 100 feet of the illegal quarry, sources said. Police and rescue teams have reached the spot and using two motor pumps to pump out the water.

"Rat hole" mining is a hazardous technique where narrow tunnels are manually dug by workers. These tunnels lead to deep pits from which coal is mined.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma informed that the rescue teams are on their way to Um-rangshu in Dima Hasao district, where several labourers are trapped in a coal mine.

Taking to X, Sarma said that the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) are on their way to the mine site and the Army's assistance has been sought.

Sarma said that the exact number of trapped labourers is unknown.

Earlier, Dima Hasao Superintendent of Police (SP) Mayank Kumar Jha said that several people were feared trapped inside the coal mine in Umrangshu of Assam's Dima Hasao district. *—ANI*

Security personnel at the site after Naxals blew up their vehicle with an improvised explosive device in Bijapur, on Monday *PHOTO; PTI*

8 jawans, driver killed as Naxals blow up Ch'garh

BIJAPUR, 6 JAN

A devastating attack occurred in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Monday when Naxals detonated a powerful improvised explosive device (IED), killing eight District Reserve Guard (DRG) jawans and a civ-il-ian driver. This incident marks the most significant strike by Maoists against security forces in the state in two years and the first of 2025.

The attack took place near Ambeli village, within the Kutru police station area, around 2.15pm, as the DRG personnel were returning from an anti-Naxalite operation. Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P reported that all eight jawans and the driver died instantly in the explosion. The DRG, formed primarily from local tribal populations and former Naxalites, had been engaged in a three-day operation near the borders during which five Naxalites were killed.

I assure you that the sacrifice of our soldiers will not go in vain. We will end Naxalism in India by March 2026
—Amit Shah, Union Home Minister

Visuals from the scene revealed a massive 10-foot-deep crater where the road once lay, and remnants of the vehicle were scattered, including a part lodged in a tree.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai expressed profound sorrow over the loss, stating, "The mar-tyrdom of the soldiers will not go in vain" and underscoring the frustration of the Naxalites in light of on-going counter-insurgency efforts in Bastar.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah vowed to eradicate Naxalism from India by March 2026, affirming that sacrifice of those lost will be remembered. *—PTI*

MURDER-SUICIDE PACT

Bengaluru techie, wife poison 2 children, kill themselves

BENGALURU, 6 JAN

A family of four, including a software consultant, his wife, and their two children, were found dead in their rented home in Bengaluru's.

The victims, Anoop Kumar, 38, his wife Rakhi, 35, were found dead with their two children, five-year-old Anupriya and two-year-old Priyank. It is believed that the couple took their own lives after reportedly feeding the toddlers food laced with poison.

The family, originally from Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, had been living in a rented property in RMV Extension 2nd Phase in Bengaluru.

The news report claims that the couple may have been struggling emotionally, report-edly due to their elder child's health condition.

The grim discovery was made by the family's domestic help, who found the door unanswered despite multiple attempts to ring the bell.

Police revealed that prior to the incident, Anoop had told the domestic staff that the family was planning a trip to Puducherry the following morning and had asked them to arrive early. Preliminary investigations hint that financial distress or debt may also be contributing factors. *—Salar News (Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777.)*

Anoop Kumar, 38; Priyank, 2; Anupriya, 5; and Rakhi, 35

Newborn abandoned in HD Kote drain

MYSURU, 6 JAN

A newborn boy was discovered abandoned in a drain in Rajegowdanahundi, H D Kote taluk, during the early hours of Monday. Residents, alerted by the cries of a baby near the drain, found the infant wrapped in a bedsheet on a chilly morning and promptly notified local Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) Sarojamma and Chandramma. The ASHAs rescued the baby and subsequently handed him over to the taluk child welfare officer, who ensured he was taken immediately to the taluk general hospital for treatment. Following an examination by the doctor on duty, the baby was reported to be in stable condition. Police have registered a case against unknown individuals in connection with the incident. *—Salar News*

Two injured in LPG cylinder blast in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 6 JAN

Two men sustained severe burn injuries following an explosion from a Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinder in a residential property at Krishnappa Layout, Bommasandra, on Monday morning. The victims, identified as Sunil and Vishnu, both from Kerala, were swiftly transported to a nearby hospital for urgent treatment. The blast, which occurred around 8am, caused extensive damage to the first-floor flat they shared, compromising the structure's integrity and shattering windows, doors, and walls. Debris fell onto the street, damaging several parked vehicles. A local resident described the explosion as "deafening" and expressed astonishment at the building's condition, noting it was fortunate that the structure did not fully collapse. Authorities, including the Surya Nagar police and fire officials, are investigating the incident to determine whether negligence or a technical fault caused the explosion. *—Salar News*

Amid HMPV scare, doctors call for caution

Doctors stress that it is not comparable to Covid-19 in terms of severity as of now

BENGALURU, 6 JAN

After two cases of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) were reported in the City, medical experts stress the need for responsible communication to ensure public awareness without causing undue panic.

While the experts agree that HMPV is a respiratory virus known to cause illnesses ranging from mild colds to severe pneumonia, they emphasised that it is not comparable to Covid-19 in terms of severity or scale, at least at this stage.

Dr Sheela Chakravarthy, Director of Internal Medicine at Fortis Hospital, Bengaluru, said that while HMPV warrants attention, it does not currently pose the same level of threat as the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It's still too early to draw direct comparisons to Covid-19. So far, we haven't seen the kind of severity or widespread quarantines and deaths that occurred with Covid-19."

She noted that HMPV has been part of existing respiratory infection panels like the biofire panel, which tests for multiple viruses.

Dr Sujatha Thyagarajan, Lead and Head of Pediatric Intensive Care and Pediatric Emergency at Aster RV Hospital, said, "Between 2022 and 2024, Aster RV hospitals identified 17 positive cases of HMPV out of 291 samples tested. Notably, all hospitalised patients had co-infections involving both viral and bacterial pathogens," she explained. These co-infections appear to increase the severity of the illness, leading to hospitalisation for an average of three days, particularly in children." Dr Ganesh Srinivasa Prasad, a nephrologist and transplant physician at Narayana Health City said, "The biofire panel regularly identifies HMPV, as it's a common virus. However, it becomes concerning if the strain detected is similar to the one in China. That said, exaggerating the situation without sufficient data is pure fear-mongering. Half-baked news is hazardous to society," he stated.

Dr Shivakumar K, MD in Respiratory Medicine and Chief Consultant Pulmonologist at Kauvery Hospital, Marathahalli, said, "HMPV is an RNA virus with a genome encoding nine proteins, including the F (fusion) and G (glycoprotein) proteins, which play critical roles in viral entry into host cells and evasion of the immune response," he explained.

He said, "Regularly disinfect high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs, mobile phones, and countertops." *—Salar News*

The experts have stressed the need for responsible communication to ensure public awareness without causing undue panic *PHOTO: PTI*

> **HMPV has been part of existing respiratory infection panels like the biofire panel, which tests for multiple viruses**
>
> -Dr Sheela Chakravarthy, Fortis Hospital

> **Between 2022 and 2024, Aster RV hospitals identified 17 positive cases of HMPV out of 291 samples tested**
>
> -Dr Sujatha Thyagarajan, Aster RV Hospital

> **Regularly disinfect high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs, mobile phones, and countertops.**
>
> -Dr Shivakumar, Kauvery Hospital

CM asks officials to take precautionary measures

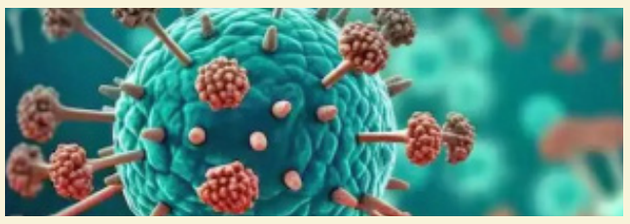
BENGALURU, 6 JAN

With two cases of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) detected in State, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said he has directed the health and medical education departments to take all the precautionary measures.

"There is information on HMPV or China virus infection in Karnataka. I have instructed the health department to take precautionary measures, I have also spoken to Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao. We -- Health and Medical Education departments -- will take all the precautionary measures to control it," Siddaramaiah said.

Briefing reporters here, he said the infections have been detected in two children. "Though it is not a dangerous virus, precautionary measures need to be taken."

The Indian Council of Medical Research has detected two cases of HMPV in Karnataka through routine surveillance for multiple respiratory viral pathogens, the Union health ministry earlier said on Monday. *—PTI*



ABOUT HMPV

As Karnataka reported 2 cases of the human metapneumovirus (HMPV), here is a look at the causes and symptoms of the respiratory virus

- Discovered in 2001 in the Netherlands
- Spreads via respiratory droplets or contact with contaminated surfaces
- Commonly affects ind viduals before age 5
- Infections peak in late winter and spring

COMMON SYMPTOMS

1. Fever (above 38°C/98.6°F).
2. Persistent cough
3. Nasal congestion or runny nose.
4. Breathing difficulties (rapid or laboured breathing, wheezing)
5. Fatigue (irritability, reduced activity)
6. Poor feeding

SEVERE SYMPTOMS

1. Pneumonia
2. Bronchiolitis
3. Worsened asthma or asthma attacks
4. Sore throat lasting over two weeks, even with treatment

WHO IS AT RISK?

Young children: ESPECIALLY INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Elderly: THOSE AGED 65+ OR WITH CHRONIC CONDITIONS LIKE ASTHMA OR COPD

TRANSMISSION: Spread through respiratory droplets or contact with contaminated surfaces

INCUBATION: 3–6 days post-exposure

ILLNESS DURATION: Typically 7–10 days, but up to 16 days in high-risk groups

TREATMENT No specific antiviral or vaccine available

Mild cases: Rest, hydration, fever and congestion management

Severe cases: Oxygen therapy, inhalers, or hospitalisation for complications like pneumonia

PREVENTION

1. Cover mouth and nose when coughing sneezing
2. Wash hands frequently with soap.
3. Avoid public places if symptomatic
4. Limit touching eyes, nose, and mouth
5. Wear masks in crowded areas
6. Disinfect frequently touched surfaces
7. Avoid close contact with sick individuals

FATALITY RATE Typically causes mild illness but may lead to severe respiratory conditions in high-risk groups. Lower fatality rate compared to severe Covid-19 cases

Vice President to visit Dharmasthala today

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar will visit Dharmasthala in Karnataka today. During the visit, Dhankhar will inaugurate the Mega Queue Complex and launch the 2024-25 Jnanadeepa programme at Shree Kshetra Dharmasthala, his office said on Monday. *—PTI*

Kumbh Mela Express to depart City on 8 Jan

BENGALURU, 6 JAN

South Western Railway (SWR) announced on Monday the operation of a special one-way Kumbh Mela Express Special between Bengaluru and Prayagraj on January 8 to cater to the increased passenger demand. Train No. 06577 Kumbh Mela Express Special will depart from SMVT Bengaluru at 23:50 on 8 January and arrive at Prayagraj at 17:15 on 10 January, said a press release issued by the SWR. Enroute, the train will halt at Whitefield, Bangarapet, Jolarpettai, Katpadi, Perambur, Gudur, Vijayawada, Warangal, Balharshah, Chandrapur, Sevagram, Nagpur, Itarsi, Jabalpur, Satna, and Manikpur. The train will consist of 20 coaches, including 14 general second class coaches, four sleeper coaches, and two luggage cum brake vans. *—PTI*

Jarkiholi stakes claim to CM post

BELAGAVI, 6 JAN

Public Works Department minister representing Yamakanamaradi constituency in Belagavi district

Satish Jarkiholi said that he would be the leading candidate for the chief minister's post from the party after 2028 Assembly election.

Speaking to reporters in Raichur on Monday, he said that that Siddaramaiah would complete his full term and there was no question of changing him.

He said, "Despite spending crores of rupees for guarantee schemes Siddaramaiah government has not borrowed a single rupee," Jarkiholi said, adding that the government exchequer was empty when the party came to rule defeating Basavaraj Bommai led BJP government in 2023.

He said that he has an ability of winning at least 40 assembly seats in northern range for which he was claiming for the Chief Minister's post. Belagavi district Congress committee president Vinay Navalgatti said that Congress party came back to power because of the contribution of Jarkiholi.

When asked about Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar' claim on the post, he said that the matter would be solved amicably and added that most of the Siddaramaiah supporting legislators were backing him. "I'm sure that apart from 35-40 legislators from our region, all most all the legislators of Siddaramaiah will agree for my candidature for CM's post," Jarkiholi said. One of the BJP legslators representing Belagavi district said Hubballi-Dharwad had got chief ministers whereas none among 18 legislators from Belagavi was in Chief Minister seat till date. *—Salar News*

Satish Jarkiholi *PHOTO: X*

DKS announces 'Pyari Didi Yojana' in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar announced the first of Congress' guarantees in the national capital, the "Pyari Didi" scheme, which will provide Rs 2,500 to women there.

Addressing a joint press conference with Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav, Karnataka Shivakumar said, "Today, I am here to launch the 'Pyari Didi' scheme. I am confident that Congress will form the govt in Delhi and we will provide Rs 2,500 to women, and it will be decided in the very first meeting of cabinet - on the same model that we implemented in Karnataka."

Shivakumar also said that whatever the party had promised they have delivered.

On the potential political motive behind Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's dinner, he said, "It is common for politicians to attend dinner meets. The media should not politicise the dinner meet. *—ANI*

Delhi Congress President Devender Yadav, Deputy CM DK Shivakumar in New Delhi, on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

8-yr-old Mysuru girl dies of cardiac arrest

MYSURU, 6 JAN

In a shocking incident, an eight-year-old girl, Tejaswini, a third-grade student at St Francis School in Chamarajanagar, tragically died of cardiac arrest on Monday.

Tejaswini, the daughter of Shruthi and Lingaraju from Chamarajanagar taluk, reportedly felt dizzy and lost her balance before collapsing in the school corridors. Immediate action was taken by the school staff, who rushed her to JSS Hospital. Despite the hospital providing urgent medical treatment, the young girl could not be saved, and doctors pronounced her dead, attributing the cause to cardiac arrest.

In the wake of this tragic event, Block Education Officer Hanumanthashetty visited the school to gather information from both staff and students. He stated to reporters that the girl was 'normal' and had been attending school regularly before this sudden occurrence.

The Principal of the school, Fr Prabhakar, expressed deep sorrow over the loss of his student, reflecting the shock felt throughout the school community. *—Salar News*

SC moves CCI cases on Amazon, Flipkart to K'taka HC

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

The Supreme Court on Monday transferred to Karnataka High Court petitions of Amazon and Flipkart, challenging a Competition Commission of India order for a probe into the e-commerce giants for alleged malpractices.

A bench of Justice Abhay S Oka and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan said if pleadings in some of the transferred petitions were not completed, the judge seized of the matter would grant reasonable time to complete the pleadings.

During the hearing, Attorney General R Venkataramani informed the apex court that, after filing of the present petition by fair trade regulator the Competition Commission of India (CCI), five pleas had been filed in different high courts. The apex court had earlier issued a notice on the plea filed by the CCI, which sought the transfer of the petitions filed by the e-commerce giants from the high courts to the top court or Delhi High Court. *—PTI*

TO BENEFIT 2.5 LAKH

Minister launches train for Yellow Line metro

BENGALURU, 6 JAN

Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar on Monday launched the first domestically manufactured train set for Namma Metro's Yellow Line.

Addressing the gathering virtually, Khattar said Bengaluru, a global hub of IT and innovation, continues to address urban challenges with enhanced metro connectivity, benefiting millions.

"As we inaugurate Bengaluru Metro's new train set and surpass 1,000 kilometres of operational metro rail, we celebrate a significant milestone in India's urban mobility journey," he added.

Acknowledging the inadvertent delay of the Yellow Line of Namma Metro, BJP MP Tejasvi Surya said with the launch of the first train set at Titagarh Rail Systems, Kolkata, the project will soon be functional benefitting over 2.5 lakh passengers.

Titagarh Rail Systems is a comprehensive mobility solution provider with a strong presence in India and Italy.

"I am aware of the inadvertent delay to the project, which was supposed to have been completed in 2017, due to various reasons, including Covid. I am also aware of how important the Yellow Line is for Bengaluru because it connects the heart of the city," said Surya. According to website of Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL), a joint venture of the Government of India and the State Government of Karnataka, once operational, the Yellow Line of Namma Metro will significantly ease congestion in critical areas like Electronics City and Silk Board. The line spans 18.8km from RV Road to Bommasandra with 16 stations, connecting Bengaluru South's ITBT and industrial corridors. It includes three interchange stations (Silk Board, RV Road and Jayadeva), enabling seamless transfers to the Pink, Green and Purple lines of the Metro. *—PTI*

The Yellow Line of Namma Metro will significantly ease congestion in critical areas such as Electronics City and Silk Board *PHOTO: ANI*

SpaDex docking postponed to 9 Jan: ISRO

BENGALURU, 6 JAN

ISRO on Monday said the docking experiment of SpaDeX satellites scheduled for 7 January is postponed to 9 January.

The Bengaluru-based space agency said the docking process requires further validation through ground simulations based on an abort scenario identified on Monday.

ISRO had successfully launched the ambitious Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) mission on 30 December.

The PSLV C60 rocket carrying two small satellites, SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target), along with 24 payloads, had lifted off from the first launchpad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, and about 15 minutes after liftoff, the two small spacecraft weighing about 220 kg each were launched into a 475-km circular orbit as intended.

According to ISRO, SpaDeX mission is a cost-effective technology demonstrator mission for the demonstration of in-space docking using two small spacecraft that was launched by PSLV.

This technology is essential for India's space ambitions such as Indian on Moon, sample return from the Moon, the building and operation of Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), etc. In-space docking technology is essential when multiple rocket launches are required to achieve common mission objectives. Through this mission, India is marching towards becoming the fourth country in the world to have space docking technology. *—PTI*

CAG: Kejri's 'Sheesh Mahal' costs Rs 80 cr

BJP says report showed Rs 33.86 cr expense till 2022, but there is no record after that

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

BJP on Monday claimed that a CAG report raised 139 questions related to former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's previous Flagstaff Road residence and "exposed his "black deeds".

No immediate reaction was available from AAP on the charges.

Addressing a press conference, the BJP's Delhi president Virendra Sachdeva said the report of 2022 cited an expenditure of Rs 33.86 crore on the "Sheesh Mahal" but the actual cost was far higher.

"This report pertains to expenditure till 2022. There is no revelation on expenses of 2023 and 2024 and, according to our information, the real cost runs up to Rs 75-80 crore if the inventory of the items in the bungalow are included," he claimed.

BJP has sharpened its attack on Kejriwal ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, alleging corruption related to the 6, Flagstaff Road, bungalow that he occupied as chief minister.

Arvind Kejriwal's Flagstaff Road residence's interiors **PHOTO: PTI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also took a jibe at Kejriwal, saying he built a "Sheesh Mahal" instead of paying attention to Delhi's public infrastructure.

Sachdeva charged, "The Controller and Auditor General (CAG) has raised 139 questions and very minutely detailed the black deeds of Kejriwal."

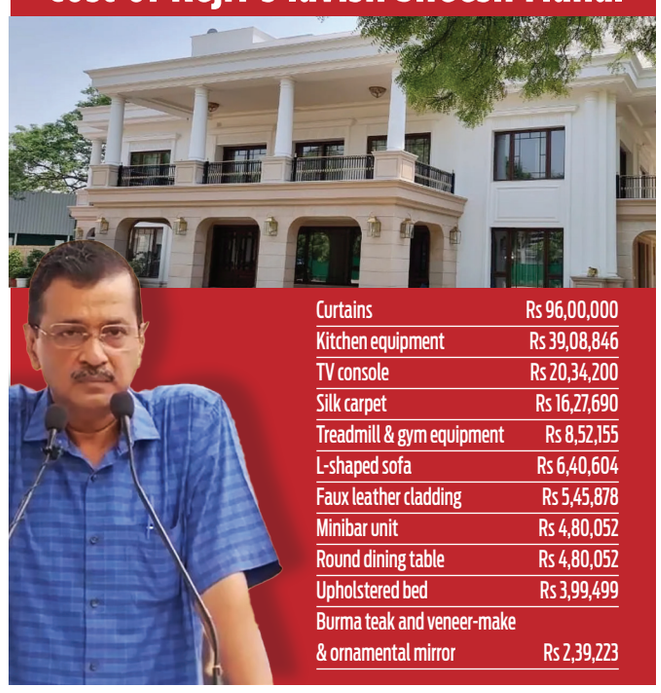
- This report pertains to expenditure till 2022. There is no revelation on expenses of 2023 and 2024 and, according to our information, the real cost runs up to Rs 75-80 crore if the inventory of the items in the bungalow are included

He alleged that the bungalow was reconstructed without permission of the Delhi Urban Arts Commission and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

"What message did a chief minister give to Delhi by constructing the bungalow in an unauthorised manner?" he asked.

If the real cost of the bungalow is to be determined, the accounts of the public works and other departments have to be checked, Sachdeva said. *—PTI*

Cost of Kejri's lavish Sheesh Mahal



Curtains	Rs 96,00,000
Kitchen equipment	Rs 39,08,846
TV console	Rs 20,34,200
Silk carpet	Rs 16,27,690
Treadmill & gym equipment	Rs 8,52,155
L-shaped sofa	Rs 6,40,604
Faux leather cladding	Rs 5,45,878
Minibar unit	Rs 4,80,052
Round dining table	Rs 4,80,052
Upholstered bed	Rs 3,99,499
Burma teak and veneer-make & ornamental mirror	Rs 2,39,223

Indian fishermen beaten up in B'desh jail: Didi

KOLKATA, 6 JAN

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday alleged that some of the 95 fishermen, who were released by the Bangladesh government recently, were beaten up in jail in the neighbouring country. "I found some of them were limping. When asked, the fishermen told me that they were assaulted in jail with their hands tied. As a result, they have injuries below the waist and the legs.. They were crying while talking to me," Banerjee said. A total of 95 Indian fishermen and crew members on board six fishing boats were detained after they "mistakenly" went inside the waters of the neighbouring country in October and November last year. *—PTI*

Drugs seized in Manipur, 2 arrested

IMPHAL, 6 JAN

Security forces arrested two persons after they were found carrying illegal drugs including brown sugar in a four-wheeler in Manipur's Churachandpur district, police said on Monday. Security forces were conducting random checking and frisking at Khuga in Matta village when two people driving a four-wheeler were found carrying illegal drugs on Sunday. They seized 776 gm of brown sugar and 537 Yaba tablets from the possession of the two people. Yaba is a combination of metham-phetamine (a powerful and addictive stimulant) and caffeine. Police arrested one cadre of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party-People's War Group from Kakching district on Sunday for alleged involvement in extortion activities, they said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Maiyan Samman: Soren gives ₹1,415 crore to 56L women

RANCHI, 6 JAN

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Monday transferred financial assistance to the tune of Rs 1,415.44 crore to the bank accounts of 56.61 lakh women beneficiaries under the 'Maiyan Samman Yojana'. Soren transferred the amount during a ceremony at Namkum, which was initially scheduled for 28 December last year, but got postponed due to the national mourning following the demise of former prime minister Manmohan Singh. Under the 'Maiyan Samman Yojana', the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led alliance had pledged to increase the monthly honorarium from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,500, starting December 2024. The initiative has been widely credited for bolstering the INDIA bloc's electoral success in Jharkhand. *—PTI*

2 Odisha BJP leaders killed in 'intentional' collision: Cops

BHUBANESWAR, 6 JAN

The police on Monday said a dumper had "intentionally" hit the vehicle of two BJP leaders in Odisha's Sambalpur district. The two BJP leaders, identified as BJP's Goshala mandal president Debendra Nayak and ex-sarpanch Muralidhar Chhuria, were killed after the dumper hit their car in the early hours of Sunday. The incident happened around 1.30 am on NH 53 in the Burla police station area. There were six people in the car, including the driver, and they were returning home in Kardola from Bhubaneswar, police said. The police are now interrogating the dumper driver. At what time he left and stayed on the highway, the SP stated. All six people were taken to a nearby hospital where doctors declared two of them dead. The injured were undergoing treatment there. *—PTI*

Delhi CM Atishi breaks down during press conference **PHOTO: PTI**

Atishi changed her father, says Bidhuri; CM breaks down

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Monday broke down while addressing a press conference here over BJP leader Ramesh Bidhuri's remarks against her.

BJP's Kalkaji candidate Bidhuri on Sunday courted controversy for his remarks on Atishi's surname.

Responding to Bidhuri's charge, Atishi said, "How can our politics downgrade so much? He should show what work he has done for Kalkaji when he was MP for 10 years."

He should ask for votes based on his work, not by abusing my father, she added.

Speaking at BJP's 'Parivartan Rally' in Rohini that was later addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bidhuri said Atishi changed her surname from "Marlena" to "Singh".

Atishi, who is the sitting MLA from the Kalkaji Assembly seat, dropped her surname a while back.

"This Marlena (surname used earlier by Atishi) became Singh and changed her name. Kejriwal swore over his children not to go with the corrupt Congress; Marlena changed fathers. Earlier she was Marlena; now she has become Singh. This is their character," Bidhuri charged. *—PTI*

Anthem insulted: TN Guv leaves Assembly

CHENNAI, 6 JAN

In yet another Governor versus government face-off in Tamil Nadu, the former walked out of the Assembly without delivering his customary address on Monday, opposing what he described as 'disrespect' to the Constitution and the national anthem by the ruling DMK.

Chief Minister MK Stalin dubbed Ravi's behaviour 'childish,' and accused him of continuously insulting the people of the state, the elected government and the Assembly as well, which was unbecoming to the post he holds. DMK announced a state-wide protest against Ravi on Tuesday for 'continuously insulting' state anthem, (invocation to Mother Tamil) and the state.

Governor Ravi addressing during Tamil Nadu Assembly session **PHOTO: X**

The matter snowballed into a war of words between the Raj Bhavan and the ruling dispensation and Ravi said he had always upheld the sanctity of the state song, "Tamil Thaai Vazhthu," and he said he "sings it with reverence at every event."

the arrival of Governor, the state song was played in the Assembly and when the proceedings were about to commence, and a few moments before Ravi began making his remarks, members of the main opposition AIADMK gathered in front of him, and raised slogans, holding placards.

> **It is childish for the governor, who edited the speech last year to have not read it this year**
>
> -MK Stalin, Tamil Nadu CM

The AIADMK members were evicted en masse by marshalls following Speaker M Appavu's order for causing disruption and they continued to raise slogans by gathering in the corridors. *—PTI*

PK arrested, later gets bail over BPSC protest

PATNA, 6 JAN

Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor was released from jail on Monday evening, hours after he was sent to judicial custody upon refusal of bail, the conditions of which were initially dubbed by him 'unreasonable'.

It was not immediately known whether Kishor accepted the bail conditions imposed by a court here or whether the court revised its order.

Senior lawyer YV Giri, who is actively associated with Kishor's party, earlier said the bail was granted with an "unreasonable" condition that Kishor must give a written undertaking, which would have been tantamount to "admitting guilt".

Talking to PTI, Patna Senior Superintendent of Police Awakash Kumar said, "Yes, Kishor has been granted bail by the competent court late in the evening. He has been released from the Beur Central jail".

Earlier in the day, Kishor was arrested for his illegal fast unto death and sent to jail upon refusal to accept bail, granted by the court here with conditions that he alleged were "unreasonable".

The 47-year-old was last week booked for holding 'Aamaran anshan' (fast unto death) at Gandhi Maidan, in violation of a Patna High Court order that forbids any such demonstration at a place other than Gardani Bagh locality in the city. *—PTI*

Nitish rules out leaving NDA

PATNA, 6 JAN

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has ruled out any possibility of leaving the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), highlighting his long-standing relationship with the BJP. Reflecting on his political journey during a tour of Vaishali district as part of the state's 'Pragati Yatra', Kumar described his past alliances with the RJD and Congress as "mistakes".

He fondly recalled the support he received from former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, stating, "It was respected Atal ji who made me a Union minister... he used to shower so much affection on me." Kumar added that he never faced difficulties in getting his proposals approved during Vajpayee's tenure. Furthermore, he revealed that it was Vajpayee's desire for him to become Chief Minister when the NDA won the assembly elections in Bihar in 2005. *—PTI*

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar pays tribute to former deputy CM of Bihar Sushil Kumar Modi on his birth anniversary, in Patna **PHOTO: PTI**

Time not far for 1st bullet train to run in India: PM

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

The time when the first bullet train will run in India is not far, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday as he underlined the "rising" demand for high-speed trains from across the country and the sector's "historic transformation" under his government. Launching a slew of rail projects, including inauguration of the Jammu division, he said Railways had seen a historic transformation. *—PTI*

Jan Suraaj Party Chief Prashant Kishor being produced before a local court after he was arrested, in Patna, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

'ACCEPT MEDICAL AID'

SC panel meets farmer leader Dallewal

NEW DELHI/ CHANDIGARH, 6 JAN

A Supreme Court-appointed committee met with septuagenarian farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal on Monday afternoon, following a notification from the Punjab government regarding the scheduled meeting.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing the Punjab government, informed Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh that the protesting farmers had been convinced to engage with the committee led by retired Justice Nawab Singh.

Sibal expressed optimism about the meeting's potential outcomes, stating, "We are hopeful that there will be a breakthrough. Kindly take it up after a couple of days." The bench responded with hope that a resolution could be reached.

The Supreme Court requested Sibal to prepare a brief summary of the discussions before the next hearing set for 10 January. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta indicated that the committee would also submit its report on the meeting.

Supreme Court appointed panel meets farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal on Monday **PHOTO: ANI**

Dallewal, convener of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political), has been on an indefinite hunger strike since 26 November, 2024, demanding a legal guarantee for the minimum support price for crops. His health has worsened, prompting the committee to urge him to seek medical assistance, which he has previously declined.

The Supreme Court had previously tasked Punjab officials with determining Dallewal's specific medical needs amid his deteriorating condition. Established by the Supreme Court in September 2024, the committee aims to address the grievances of the protesting farmers, who have been demonstrating at the Khanauri and Shambhu borders since 13 February, 2024, after their march to Delhi was halted.

Justice Nawab Singh expressed concern for Dallewal's well-being, stating, "We want his health to be good." *—PTI*

- Dallewal, convener of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political), has been on an indefinite hunger strike since 26 November, 2024, demanding a legal guarantee for minimum support price for crops

Formula race: KTR's lawyer denied entry to ACB office

HYDERABAD, 6 JAN

Tensions flared at the Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) office as BRS Working President **KT Rama Rao**, summoned in connection with the Formula E race investigation, was barred from entering with his lawyer. Arriving at the ACB headquarters around 10am, KTR, also known as KT Rama Rao, was prevented from entering the premises due to police objections regarding his lawyer's presence.

Speaking to officials from his car, KTR submitted a written statement outside the office instead of appearing before ACB officials.

Asserting his right to legal representation, he expressed concerns that the ACB might manipulate his statement, drawing parallels to former BRS MLA Patnam Narender Reddy's case, who was arrested for attacking government officials.

KTR labelled Congress leader Revanth Reddy a "third-rate criminal" and accused the ACB of acting under the Chief Minister's orders. "I am a law-abiding citizen," he stated. Commenting on the exchange, Congress MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy urged KTR to remain responsible in his statements amid claims of frustration over perceived power losses.

In a notice, the ACB had requested KTR to provide information related to alleged irregularities in the Formula E race, associated with a loss to the state exchequer of approximately Rs 55 crore.

The case is being pursued under the Prevention of Corruption Act, with KTR also scheduled to appear before the ED for questioning on 7 January. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

3 tigers, leopard die of Avian flu in Nagpur

NAGPUR, 6 JAN

Three tigers and a leopard died of avian influenza at an animal rescue centre in Maharashtra's Nagpur, prompting the authorities to put zoos on alert, an official said on Monday. Following the deaths that occurred at the end of last month, the Central government has issued an advisory, directing zoos to take precautionary measures, the official said. Shatanik Bhagwat, divisional manager of the Gorewada project, said the animals had been relocated to Gorewada Rescue Centre from Chandrapur following incidents of man-animal conflict. The animals showed different symptoms but limped and suffered from fever in the third week of December, he said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Delhi HC to hear Umar, Imam's bail pleas in 2020 riots

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

The Delhi High Court will on 7 January hear bail pleas of student activists Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam and other accused in the UAPA case related to February, 2020 violence. Justices Navin Chawla and Shalinder Kaur are scheduled to hear the cases. Delhi Police is likely to commence its submissions in the cases. Khalid, Imam and others were booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and provisions of the IPC for allegedly being the "masterminds" of the February 2020 riots, which left 53 people dead and over 700 injured. The accused persons sought bail from the court on the grounds, including their prolonged incarceration and parity with co-accused who were granted on bail. *—PTI*

Bihar teen sends bomb threat to Kumbh Mela, held

MAHAKUMBH NAGAR, 6 JAN

Uttar Pradesh Police has detained a Class 11 student from Bihar's Purnia district for allegedly threatening to bomb the Maha Kumbh Mela starting 13 January in Prayagraj, officials said on Monday. Senior Superintendent of Police (Kumbh), Rajesh Dwivedi, said the 17-year-old student, who was brought to Prayagraj on Sunday for questioning, has been sent to a remand home. The accused allegedly created a fake Instagram profile in the name of one his classmates to settle a score, and posted provocative content from it, including a threat to kill 1,000 devotees at the Maha Kumbh, the SSP said. Police took up the probe after filing a case at the Mela Kotwali police station under relevant sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Information Technology Act, he added. *—PTI*

HC gives 6 weeks to MP for Union Carbide disposal

BHOPAL, 6 JAN

The Madhya Pradesh High Court on Monday granted six weeks to the state government to act on the Union Carbide factory waste disposal as per the safety guidelines. It also directed the media not to give incorrect news on the issue of the waste disposal. The waste, packed in 12 sealed containers, was shifted on 2 January from the now defunct Union Carbide factory in state capital Bhopal to the disposal site at Pithampur in Dhar district, located 250 km from here. A division bench of High Courtncomprising Chief Justice SK Kait and Justice Vivek Jain granted time to the state government after Advocate General Prashant Singh sought it to take the public of Pithampur into confidence and dispel fear from their mind before taking up the waste disposal. *—PTI*

Dam won't hit India's water flow: China

China says Brahmaputra dam will aid in disaster prevention & have no ecological impacts

BEIJING, 6 JAN

The geopolitical implications of the massive dam are likely to remain a contentious issue PHOTO: BRITANNICA

China has reaffirmed its commitment to construct the world's largest dam on the Brahmaputra River, known as the Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet, close to the Indian border. The project, expected to cost approximately USD 137 billion, has reportedly passed rigorous scientific assessments, with Chinese officials asserting that it will not adversely affect downstream countries, including India and Bangladesh.

The announcement was made by Guo Jiakun, the newly appointed spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, during a media briefing. He stated that the hydropower initiative has been thoroughly vetted and will, in fact, aid in disaster prevention, climate change response, and the ecological management of the region. However, this assertion comes amidst heightened concerns expressed by India, with discussions on the issue taking place during meetings between Indian officials and US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in New Delhi.

India has voiced its apprehensions regarding the impact of the dam on the Brahmaputra's downstream flow. On 3 January, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal urged China to consider the interests of downstream states and reaffirmed India's determination to safeguard its water rights. "We will continue to monitor and take necessary measures to protect our interests," he stated. He emphasised the necessity for transparency and collaboration between India and China regarding the dam's potential effects.

Chinese officials have consistently defended the project. On 27 December, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning dismissed concerns from India and Bangladesh, insisting that the dam's construction will not negatively impact lower riparian states. She highlighted that comprehensive studies have addressed safety issues and underscored China's commitment to maintaining communication with downstream nations while promoting cooperation in disaster prevention.

As the project advances, the geopolitical tension remains a contentious issue. *—PTI*

India condemns Pak airstrikes on Afghanistan

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

- The statement unequivocally condemned the attack on innocent civilians and emphasised India's strong stance on such actions.

India has strongly condemned Pakistan's recent airstrikes on Afghanistan, accusing the neighbouring country of using its longstanding tactic of blaming others for its internal failures. In a statement issued on Monday, the Ministry of External Affairs expressed concern over the civilian casualties caused by the strikes, which reportedly killed several women and children. The statement unequivocally condemned the attack on innocent civilians and emphasised India's strong stance on such actions. "We condemn any attack on innocent civilians," the statement read, referencing media reports on the airstrikes that targeted locations in Afghanistan's Paktika province.

In December, the Taliban reported that at least 46 civilians, including women and children, were killed in the airstrikes carried out by Pakistan. Afghan government spokesperson Hamdullah Fitrat confirmed that the victims were refugees who had fled Pakistan's northwest region. Additionally, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which is allied with the Afghan Taliban, claimed that 50 people, including 27 women and children, were killed in the airstrikes. The TTP also released photos, alleging that they depicted children who had been killed in the attack.

The airstrikes came just hours after Mohammad Sadiq, Pakistan's special representative for Afghanistan, visited Kabul for talks with Afghan officials. In response, Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry summoned Pakistan's envoy and lodged a strong protest. *—Agencies*

Road contractor arrested for killing Chhattisgarh journalist

BIJAPUR, 6 JAN

Slain journalist Mukesh Chandrakar and main accused Suresh Chandrakar PHOTO: X

Suresh Chandrakar, the primary suspect in the murder of journalist Mukesh Chandrakar in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, has been apprehended in Hyderabad by a Special Investigation Team (SIT), police announced on Monday.

Chandrakar, a contractor, had been on the run since the murder came to light on 3 January. The SIT, formed to probe the case, detained him late on Sunday night. Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P confirmed that Chandrakar was transported back to Bijapur for interrogation on Monday morning.

His brothers, Ritesh and Dinesh Chandrakar, along with supervisor Mahendra Ramteke, have already been arrested in connection with the case. Mukesh Chandrakar, 33, a freelance journalist for NDTV and creator of the popular YouTube channel 'Bastar Junction', was reported missing on 1 January. His body was discovered in a septic tank on Suresh Chandrakar's property on 3 January.

Investigators are exploring the motive behind the murder, linked to a news report aired on NDTV on 25 December which alleged corruption in a road construction project associated with Suresh Chandrakar.

Chhattisgarh's Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma has claimed that the accused has ties to the Congress party, while opposition members contend he recently switched allegiance to the ruling BJP. Authorities have taken steps to seize the accused's illegal properties, with some constructions razed, and have frozen several of his bank accounts.

The journalist's murder has sparked outrage. *—PTI*

MAN TRAMPLED BY TUSKER

Kerala MLA Anwar held for vandalism

MALAPPURAM, 6 JAN

PV Anvar PHOTO: PTI

Independent legislator PV Anvar was arrested late on Sunday night for allegedly vandalising the District Forest Office (DFO) amidst protests sparked by the death of a tribal man, who was trampled by a wild elephant in Garudamangalam. A police team apprehended Anvar at his residence in Othayi, where he accused authorities of "administrative terrorism" and claimed the police acted as if he were a criminal.

Anvar, who represents Nilambur constituency, expressed displeasure over the state government's handling of wildlife conflicts and the lack of support extended to the victim's family. He claimed that the protests conducted by his supporters from the Democratic Movement of Kerala (DMK) were a "natural emotional outburst" following the tragic incident. Around 40 protesters gathered outside the DFO, and 10 individuals, reportedly led by Anvar, entered the office and caused damage.

The Nilambur police have charged Anvar and others under multiple sections, including the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala condemned the midnight arrest, describing it as "administrative terrorism." *—PTI*

Lokpal bins corruption case against ex-CJI

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

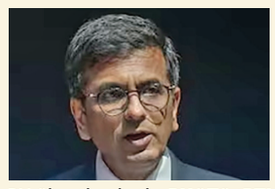
The anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal has disposed of a complaint alleging corruption against former CJI DY Chandrachud for being "barred by jurisdiction", according to an official order.

A complaint was filed on 18 October, 2024, "against the sitting Chief Justice of India (CJI) as on that date, for alleged abuse of office, amounting to corruption and malicious exercise of power to favour and protect a certain politician and political party", it said.

CJI Chandrachud demitted office on 10 November.

The Lokpal, in its order, examined in detail if a sitting CJI or a Supreme Court judge was amenable to its jurisdiction under Section 14 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act and decided to "eschew from dilating upon the diverse allegations contained in this complaint running into 382 pages".

"We say no more," according to the order



DY Chandrachud PHOTO: PTI

CJI recuses from hearing on IOA, AIFF

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Sanjiv Khanna PHOTO: PTI

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna has recused himself from hearing two crucial petitions regarding the finalisation of the constitutions of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and the All India Football Federation (AIFF), both overseen by former Supreme Court judge Justice L Nageswara Rao.

At the beginning of the session, CJI Khanna, who was alongside Justice Sanjay Kumar, announced his withdrawal, citing prior involvement in one of the petitions during proceedings in the Delhi High Court. He has directed that the cases be taken up by another bench led by Justice PS Narasimha on 10 February.

The matters were last addressed on 19 March, 2024, by a former bench under Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, which allowed the AIFF to file objections to the draft constitution drafted by Justice Rao. The court had appointed Gopal Sankaranarayanan as amicus curiae to assist and update the existing chart reflecting these objections.

The Supreme Court previously mandated the IOA's draft constitution, framed under its supervision and the International Olympic Committee's guidance, to be adopted. *—PTI*

Worship Law: Hindu body moves SC

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Akhil Bhartiya Sant Samiti, a Hindu outfit, moved Supreme Court on Monday seeking to intervene in cases filed against the validity of provisions of the 1991 law that asks to maintain the religious character of places as it existed on 15 August, 1947.

The outfit's plea, filed through lawyer Atulesh Kumar, challenges Sections 3 and 4 of the 1991 Act, arguing they violated several fundamental rights including right to equality and freedom to practice religion.

The 1991 law prohibits conversion of any place of worship and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on 15 August, 1947.

However, the dispute relating to Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid at Ayodhya was kept out of its purview.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, on 12 December, 2024, restrained till further directions the courts in the country. *—PTI*

Fog: 60 flights delayed in Kolkata

KOLKATA/SAGAR, 6 JAN

Around 60 flights were delayed at the Kolkata airport on Monday due to poor visibility, an official said.

Due to dense fog, low visibility procedures (LVP) had to be implemented at the airport from 7 am, he said.

The ATC declares LVP when visibility falls below 800 metres. It is also activated when the cloud ceiling is below 200 feet.

According to the Director of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport (NSCBIA), Pravat Ranjan Beuria, no traffic movement took place from 7.10 am to 9 am, and around 30 flight arrivals and 30 departures were delayed, the airport director said.

The visibility had dropped below the permissible limit for commercial aircraft operations on Monday morning, he said.

The Kolkata airport is equipped with CAT-III B Instrument Landing System (ILS), which allows compatible aircraft and CAT III B trained pilots to operate with visibility up to 50 metres.

Meanwhile, four people were killed in accident in Madhya Pradesh amid fog. *—PTI*

PEARSON REPORT

India bests global average in speaking English

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

The report released is analysis of English proficiency trends across India, the Philippines, Japan, Egypt, Colombia and Europe PHOTO: Pixabay

India ranks above global average in speaking English with Delhi leading the chart followed by Rajasthan, according to Global English Proficiency Report by Pearson.

The report released on Monday is an in-depth analysis of English proficiency trends across India, the Philippines, Japan, Egypt, Colombia and Europe.

The Pearson Global English Proficiency Report 2024 aggregated and analysed data from approximately 750,000 Versant tests conducted worldwide, offering a detailed snapshot of current skill levels and emerging trends. Versant by Pearson is an English Language assessment tool that accurately and efficiently evaluates candidates' English language proficiency, assisting businesses in hiring the best talent suited for their needs.

The report cited that while India's average English skills score, 52 is lower than the global average English skills score (57), the country's average English speaking score 57 is higher 54.

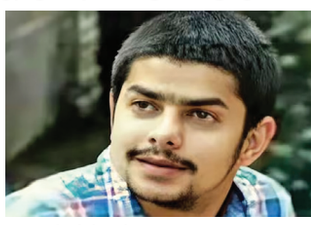
The report also said India's average English writing score 61 is equivalent to the global average writing score 61.

Delhi led with the highest English speaking score 63 followed by Rajasthan 60 and Punjab 58.

"In today's global economy, English proficiency is not just a skill but a strategic asset. The Pearson Global English Proficiency Report 2024 provides business leaders with the data-driven insights they need to make informed decisions about hiring and developing their workforce. By integrating these insights into their talent strategies, organizations can enhance their competitive edge and drive growth," said Giovanni Giovannelli, president of Pearson's English Language Learning division *—PTI*

Anmol Bishnoi ordered Baba's murder: Police

MUMBAI, 6 JAN



Anmol Bishnoi PHOTO: X

Fugitive gangster Anmol Bishnoi allegedly ordered the killing of NCP politician Baba Siddique to "create an atmosphere of terror" through his organised crime syndicate, the chargesheet filed by Mumbai Police on Monday said.

The crime branch named 29 accused in the 4,590-page chargesheet, including 26 already arrested and three wanted people, including Anmol, the brother of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi.

Two other wanted people are suspected co-conspirators, Mohammad Yasin Akhtar and Shubham Lonkar.

Police said they have collected strong evidence against all the 29 accused.

The crime branch filed the chargesheet in a special Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) court in Mumbai.

Police stated that Anmol, along with other members of his organised crime syndicate, hatched a conspiracy to create terror and dominance.

Former Maharashtra minister Siddique, 66, was shot dead on 12 October, 2024, by three assailants outside his son Zeeshan Siddique's office in the Bandra area of Mumbai.

The 26 arrested accused include the alleged main shooter Shivkumar Gautam and his aides. *—PTI*

US WINTER STORM ALERT

A powerful winter storm battered the central US on Sunday and forecasters warned of the heaviest snowfall in a decade' in some regions. States of emergency have been declared in Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Kansas, Arkansas, and Missouri, with Florida also preparing for rare freezing weather. National Weather Service predicts up to 8 inches of snow in Kansas and Missouri, especially north of Interstate 70, with blizzard-like conditions as winds hit 45 mph
PHOTO: PTI

HMPV not new pathogen, cases reported worldwide

Humam metapneumovirus (HMPV) is a globally recognised respiratory virus that recently gained attention after its outbreak was reported in China.

Two cases of HMPV were recently reported in Karnataka as part of routine surveillance by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

What is HMPV?

HMPV is a viral pathogen that causes respiratory infections in people of all age groups. First discovered in 2001, it belongs to the Paramyxoviridae family and is closely related to Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). HMPV spreads through respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing, as well as by touching contaminated surfaces or coming into direct contact with infected individuals.

This virus is known to cause illnesses ranging from mild respiratory discomfort to severe complications, especially in vulnerable populations such as infants, older adults and individuals with weakened immune systems. It is prevalent globally and tends to peak during late winter and early spring in temperate regions, although it circulates year-round in some areas.

Symptoms of HMPV

The symptoms of HMPV vary depending on the individual's age, general health and immune response. Mild cases typically present with a runny nose, sore throat, cough and fever, resembling a common cold. Moderate symptoms may include persistent cough, wheezing and fatigue.

In severe cases, especially in infants, older adults, and those with chronic illnesses, HMPV can lead to complications such as bronchitis, bronchiolitis or pneumonia.

Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) requiring hospitalisation may also occur. These severe presentations are particularly concerning for high-risk groups.

HMPV is a viral pathogen that causes respiratory infections in people of all age groups
PHOTO: FREEPIK

Transmission and Prevention

HMPV spreads in ways similar to other respiratory viruses such as RSV and influenza. Transmission occurs primarily through respiratory droplets from infected individuals or contact with contaminated surfaces. To prevent the spread of HMPV, practising good hand hygiene is essential, including frequent handwashing with soap and water.

Respiratory etiquette, such as covering the mouth and nose while sneezing or coughing and wearing a mask, can also limit the spread. Avoiding close contact with infected individuals and regularly disinfecting frequently touched surfaces are additional preventive measures.

How long does HMPV last?

Mild cases of human HMPV usually last a few days to a week. In severe cases, it will probably take longer to feel better. However, lingering symptoms, like a cough, may take longer to go away.

Diagnosis of HMPV

Diagnosing HMPV based solely on symptoms can be challenging, as it mimics other respiratory infections like RSV and influenza. Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) is the gold standard diagnostic tool for detecting HMPV RNA, while antigen detection assays offer quicker results.

In India, surveillance programmes like the ICMR and the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) regularly test for respiratory viruses, including HMPV, as part of their efforts to monitor and control respiratory illnesses.

Treatment of HMPV

Currently, there is no specific antiviral medication or vaccine available for HMPV. Treatment is supportive and depends on the severity of the infection. For mild cases, rest, adequate hydration and over-the-counter medications to manage fever and nasal congestion are sufficient.

In severe cases, particularly those involving pneumonia or bronchiolitis, oxygen therapy and hospitalisation may be required. Patients experiencing significant respiratory distress may need mechanical ventilation. While research is going on to develop targeted therapies and vaccines, preventive measures and early medical intervention remain key to managing HMPV infections.

Global and National Monitoring

HMPV is not a new pathogen and its cases have been reported worldwide. In India, surveillance systems like ICMR and IDSP monitor trends in respiratory illnesses, including HMPV, alongside other pathogens such as influenza and RSV.

The government has emphasized the robustness of its health infrastructure and surveillance networks, which remain vigilant to detect and respond to emerging threats.

Similarities and Differences between HMPV and Covid-19

HMPV and Covid-19, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, are both respiratory pathogens but they differ significantly in their virology, transmission dynamics.

Similarities include their modes of transmission — both spread through respiratory droplets, direct contact and contaminated surfaces. Both can cause mild to severe respiratory symptoms such as cough, fever and shortness of breath, and they are particularly dangerous for vulnerable populations, including infants, older adults and those with weakened immune systems.

Differences lie in their underlying viruses -- Covid-19 has a broader spectrum of symptoms, including loss of taste and smell and a higher potential for systemic complications like blood clotting and multi-organ failure.

Vaccines and antiviral treatments are available for Covid-19 whereas HMPV management is limited to supportive care with no specific antiviral or vaccine currently available. *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Report: 2024's weather fuels 'ferocious' floods, droughts

Weather extremes of 2024 are wreaking havoc with how water moves around the planet, contributing to ferocious floods and crippling droughts, according to a new report.

India saw record-high precipitation, along with countries in West Africa and Europe, it found.

Global warming, caused by fossil fuel burning, is increasing the strength and rainfall intensity of monsoons, cyclones and other storm systems, an international ream of researchers, led by those at The Australian National University (ANU), said.

"2024 was a year of extremes but was not an isolated occurrence. It is part of a worsening trend of more intense floods, prolonged droughts, and record-breaking extremes," lead author Albert van Dijk, a professor of water science and management, ANU, said. About four billion people, or half the world's population, from across 111 countries are estimated to have experienced their warmest year yet.

"Rising sea surface temperatures intensified tropical cyclones and droughts in the Amazon Basin and southern Africa. Global warming also contributed to heavier downpours and slower-moving storms, as evidenced by deadly flash floods in Europe, Asia and Brazil," van Dijk said.

Air temperatures over land were 1.2 degrees Celsius warmer than at the start of the century, and about 2.2 degrees Celsius higher than at the start of the Industrial Revolution, the team found. Data for analyses was taken from ground stations and satellites.

The most damaging water-related disasters included flash floods, river floods, droughts, tropical cyclones and landslides, killing more than 8,700 people, displacing 40 million people and causing economic losses exceeding USD 550 billion, according to the report.

Landslides in India's Wayanad district in Kerala are estimated to have claimed 375 lives, displacing 10,000 people and caused damages worth USD 140 million.

"The Wayanad landslides are part of a broader trend of increasing landslide events across the Western Ghats, which align with climate models predicting more frequent and intense rainfall due to global warming," the authors wrote.

In Bangladesh, heavy monsoon rains and dam releases in August caused widespread river flooding, affecting over 5.8 million people and destroying at least one million tonnes of rice, the team found.

Afghanistan, Pakistan and Brazil were among other countries affected by heavy rainfall events.

Further, rainfall records were seen to be broken more often.

"For example, record-high monthly rainfall totals were achieved 27 per cent more frequently in 2024 than at the start of this century, whereas daily rainfall records were achieved 52 per cent more frequently. Record-lows were 38 per cent more frequent, so we are seeing worse extremes on both sides," van Dijk said.

On the other hand, the Amazon Basin in South America and regions in southern Africa suffered "crippling droughts".

The authors said there was a need to prepare for and adapt to more severe weather extremes.

"That can mean stronger flood defences, developing more drought-resilient food production and water supplies, and better early warning systems," van Dijk said. *—PTI*

India saw record-high precipitation, along with countries in West Africa and Europe ***PHOTOS: PTI/ X***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Why water scarcity is key factor in Syria's protracted conflict

Water control has become a central tool in Syria's conflict, as both the state and external actors target vital resources for leverage and power.

Water security will be a key test of the new Syrian government's credibility. Since 2011, water scarcity has been a central factor in the country's prolonged conflict, manipulated for political and economic gain. In a region already vulnerable to climate change, prolonged drought and water shortages have worsened the plight of a country devastated by 13 years of war.

Before 2010, 98 per cent of urban Syrians and 92 per cent of rural residents had reliable access to safe water. Today, the United Nations estimates that "nearly two-thirds of water treatment plants, half of all pumping stations, and one-third of water towers have been damaged in the conflict."

Additionally, between 50 per cent and 95 per cent of Syria's irrigation system has been destroyed, primarily due to targeted attacks by Russia, the Assad regime, and the Islamic State.

Today, Syria is home to 6.7-7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), while 12.3-13 million Syrians have fled the country. With 90 per cent of the population living in poverty, more than 16 million require humanitarian aid – 80 per cent of whom need water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance. Food insecurity affects 12 million Syrians, with 1.8 million at risk of becoming food insecure. Cholera has placed 6.5 million people at high risk since 2022.

Water crisis in the Syrian conflict

The drought of 2006-2010 has often been cited as a precursor to the uprising against the Assad regime that erupted in 2011. However, recent analyses argue that the water crisis exacerbated public grievances rather than directly sparking the conflict.

The war itself has set a dangerous precedent for the weaponisation of water. Access to this essential resource has been denied not only through the destruction of infrastructure but also by its deliberate targeting to exert power and control over civilians.

Since 2017 the city of al-Bab in north-western Syria has been cut off from its local pumping station by the Assad regime as a punitive measure. Similarly, Turkiye's military campaigns between 2016 and 2022 targeted water resources or took control of them, selectively providing access to areas Turkish authority.

Since 2011, water scarcity has been a central factor in the country's prolonged conflict, manipulated for political and economic gain
PHOTOS: UN

Water as a weapon of war

The destruction of water facilities has been a grim feature of the conflict. In 2019 alone, UNICEF reported 46 attacks on water infrastructure.

Even water-rich regions like Latakia have faced shortages due to pipeline sabotage and resource theft, often involving figures connected to the Assad regime.

Damascus has not been spared. In December 2017, the Ain al-Fijeh water source in Wadi Barada was cut off, leaving 5 million people in the capital without safe drinking water.

Compounding these issues are the effects of climate change and natural disasters, such as the 2023 earthquake.

Since the summer of 2017, water levels in southern springs and lakes have begun to decline.

Geopolitical challenges to water security

Geopolitical tensions have further complicated Syria's water crisis. Turkiye's actions against the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the north illustrate that the end of the Assad regime does not mean the conflict is over.

Between 2019 and 2024, Turkiye targeted civilian infrastructure, including gas facilities and power plants in the North East of the country, worsening water shortages. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 11 towns and 2750 villages have suffered from the destruction of fuel, electricity, and water supplies.

Turkiye's control over the Euphrates and Tigris rivers significantly impacts Syria's water security.

Ankara, eager to stabilise its 900 km border and facilitate the return of 3.6 million Syrian refugees, has pursued aggressive campaigns against Kurdish militias to weaken the military and political power of the People's Defence Units (YPG) and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Turkiye claims that the YPG is linked to the PKK, which has been engaged in a decades-long conflict with the Turkish state.

The YPG controls a large swathe of territory in Syria along the Turkish border, which Ankara views as a security threat. However, this approach undermines Syria's prospects for peace and its ability to fully regain sovereignty.

Meanwhile, Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights continues to affect Syria's water security. Control of Mount Hermon and key water sources in Quneitra has strained agricultural irrigation, already impacted by overuse and low rainfall.

Building a new paradigm

The fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, brought about by forces led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), offers hope for change but does not immediately alter Syria's water crisis. The country remains burdened by years of war and a legacy of Ba'athist-era mismanagement.

Rebuilding Syria's water infrastructure is critical, requiring both adaptation measures and a new political paradigm.

Domestically, this includes ensuring equal access to resources and rejecting sectarianism. Regionally, Syria must address its complex relationships with neighbouring countries, particularly over shared water resources.

Developing sustainable water management practices and rebuilding trust are essential steps towards stability.

Only by addressing the political and environmental challenges head-on can Syria hope to secure a future where water scarcity no longer dictates the course of its history. *—PTI*

After China, HMPV cases now rise in Malaysia

KUALA LAMPUR, 6 JAN

Malaysia has seen a significant rise in human metapneumovirus cases in recent months. The update came even as China reported a sharp surge in respiratory illnesses over the past few weeks. According to a Strait Times report, the Malaysian health ministry has urged people to remain vigilant and noted that respiratory tract infections will continue to exist. Malaysia saw 327 HMPV cases in 2024 — a 45 per cent rise from the 225 cases reported in 2023." People have also been reminded to follow sanitary practices such as washing hands with soap, wearing a face mask and covering the nose and mouth while coughing or sneezing. China has seen a surge in respiratory in respiratory ailments — with photos and videos of people wearing masks in hospitals going viral on social media. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: X

Toll from German Christmas market attack rises to 6

BERLIN, 6 JAN

The death toll in the attack on a Christmas market in the German city of Magdeburg last month has risen to six as a woman succumbed to her injuries, prosecutors said Monday. Prosecutors in Naumburg said the 52-year-old woman died in a hospital, German news agency dpa reported. Authorities have said that the others who died were four women aged 45, 52, 67 and 75, and a 9-year-old boy. More than 200 people were injured in the 20 December attack. Authorities have identified the suspect, who was arrest-ed immediately after he drove a rented car through the crowded market early on a Friday evening, as a Saudi doctor who arrived in Germany in 2006 and had received permanent residency. *—PTI*

Pope names first woman to lead Vatican office

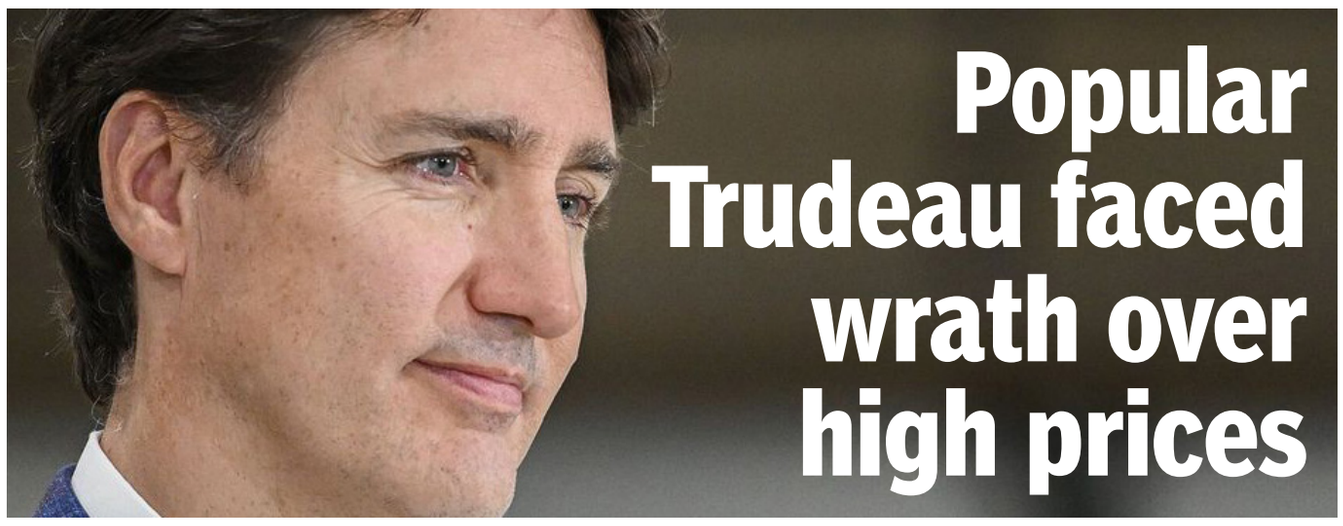
ROME, 6 JAN

Pope Francis has made history by appointing Sister Simona Brambilla as the first woman to head a significant Vatican office, assuming the role of prefect of the Dicastery for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. This unprecedented move aligns with Francis' vision of increasing women's leadership within the Church. Brambilla, a 59-year-old member of the Consolata Missionaries and former deputy in the religious orders department, takes over from Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz. While women have been in No. 2 positions, Brambilla's role as prefect marks a significant shift, complemented by Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime as her co-prefect. *—PTI*

Austrian Far-Right gets first mandate since World War II

VIENNA, 6 JAN

Herbert Kickl, leader of Austria's far-right Freedom Party, has been tasked with forming a new government for the first time since World war II following his party's victory in September's parliamentary election, where they secured 28.8 per cent of the vote, surpassing the conservative Austrian People's Party led by outgoing Chancellor Karl Nehammer. Despite initial resistance from the People's Party, Nehammer's resignation has opened the door for potential coalition talks. Kickl previously served as interior minister when the parties governed together from 2017 to 2019 before a scandal led to their collapse. The Freedom Party's policies include stringent immigration controls and a departure from certain EU initiatives. *—PTI*



Popular Trudeau faced wrath over high prices

Trudeau's party is likely to lose this election after a decade

OTTAWA, 6 JAN

Justin Trudeau who had been planning to run for a fourth term in next year's Canada election saw a major hit to his popularity amid public anger over high prices and a housing shortage. His Liberal party suffered upsets in special elections in Toronto and Montreal districts that it has held for years. No Canadian prime minister in more than a century has won four straight terms.

Based on the latest polls, Trudeau's chances for success looked slim. In the latest poll by Nanos, Liberals trail Conservatives 47 per cent to 21 per cent.

On Monday, Trudeau said his one regret of his premiership has been his failure to introduce electoral reform. In particular, he wanted Canadians to be able to choose their second and third choices in polls. He said this would have helped reduce polarisation in society and ensure "common ground" between political parties.

Over nearly a decade in power, Trudeau embraced an array of causes favoured by his liberal base. He spoke in favour of immigration at a time other countries were trying to tighten their borders. He championed diversity and gender equality, appointing a Cabinet that was equal parts men and women. He legalised cannabis.

His efforts to strike a balance between economic growth and environmental protection were criticised by both the Right and Left. He levied a tax on carbon emissions and rescued a stalled pipeline expansion project to get more of Alberta's oil to the globe.

Fewer people died from Covid-19 in Canada and his government provided massive financial support. But animosity grew among those opposed to vaccine mandates. Flags with Trudeau's name and expletives became a common sight in rural parts.

A combination of scandal and unpopular policies damaged his prospects. His father swept to power in 1968, and led Canada for almost 16 years, becoming a storied name in the country's history, most notably by opening its doors wide to immigrants. Pierre Trudeau was often compared to John F Kennedy and remains one of the few Canadian politicians who are recognised in America.

Tall and trim, with movie-star looks, Trudeau channelled the star power — if not quite the political heft — of his father. He became the second-youngest prime minister in Canada's history, and rivals said his age was a liability when he first sought office. But he won a sweeping mandate in 2015.

Trudeau is a former teacher, nightclub bouncer and snowboard instructor who has three children with his now estranged wife, a former model and TV host. *—PTI*

Eight people were injured PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

3 Israelis killed in West Bank terror shooting

TEL AVIV, 6 JAN

Gunmen opened fire on a bus carrying Israelis in the occupied West Bank on Monday, killing at least three people and wounding seven others. Violence has surged in the territory since Hamas' 7 October 2023 attack out of Gaza ignited the ongoing war there.

The attack occurred in the Palestinian village of Al-Funduq, on one of the main east-west roads crossing the territory. Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service said two women in their 60s and a man in his 40s were killed, and the military said it was looking for the attackers.

Palestinians have carried out scores of shootings, stabbing and car-ramming attacks against Israelis in recent years. Israel has launched near-nightly military raids across the territory that frequently trigger gunbattle with militants. There has also been a sharp rise in attacks on Palestinians by Israeli settlers, leading the United States to impose sanctions.

The Palestinian Health Ministry says at least 835 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank since the start of the war in Gaza. Most appear to have been militants killed in battles with Israeli troops, but the dead also include participants in violent protests and civilian bystanders.

Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war, and the Palestinians want all three territories for their future state. Some 3 million Palestinians live in the West Bank under seemingly open-ended Israeli military rule, with the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority administering population centres. *—PTI*

Russia claims town capture in eastern Ukraine; Kyiv denies

KYIV, 6 JAN

Russian troops have reportedly seized the strategic stronghold of Kurakhove in eastern Ukraine after a prolonged battle, the Defence Ministry in Moscow announced on Monday. This claim adds to the Krem-lin's list of conquests in the Donetsk region during the nearly three-year war. Ukrainian officials have not yet responded to the assertion.

The announcement follows a statement from Russia regarding a fresh offensive by Ukrainian forces in the Kursk border region. The changing dynamics of the conflict come as the inauguration of US President-elect Donald Trump approaches, introducing uncertainty that both sides appear to navigate by solidifying battlefield gains ahead of potential peace talks. Although Trump has not outlined a detailed strategy for ending hostilities, his administration is expected to influence the situation on the ground. Kurakhove is critical for Ukrainian defence, housing industrial sites, a thermal power plant, and serving as a vital transportation route between eastern and southern Ukraine. In November, reports indicated that 7,000 to 10,000 residents remained in the town, significantly down from its pre-war population, as relentless bombardments from artillery and drones have devastated infrastructure.

Ukrainian officials tend to comment on significant military setbacks only days after Russia's announce-ments, and the ongoing war has intensified in the Donetsk region. *—PTI*

Destroyed residential building in Novohrodivka after a Russian air strike in November PHOTO: NPU.GOV.UA

Section 144 imposed in Pak's Kurram district

PESHAWAR, 6 JAN

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial government has enforced Section 144 for a duration of two months in the violence-stricken Kurram district, aiming to restore order following an attack on a government convoy that left Deputy Commissioner Javedullah Mehsud and seven others injured.

Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur presided over a high-level meeting on Sunday, where it was decided to prohibit the display of arms and gatherings of five or more individuals. Additionally, public meetings and rallies along the main Parachinar highway between Tari and Chapri will also be banned.

This crackdown follows peace talks between the Alizai and Bagan tribes, which had recently concluded after sectarian clashes claimed 133 lives between 21 November and 2 December. *—PTI*

FORMER FRANCE PREZ SARKOZY ON TRIAL FOR FUNDING BY GADHAFI

PARIS, 6 JAN

Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy is set to go on trial this week, facing allegations of illegal financ-ing of his 2007 presidential campaign by the regime of Muammar Gadhafi. The trial, dubbed the "Libyan case," is anticipated to last until April 10, with a verdict to follow later.

Sarkozy, 69, has been charged with passive corruption, illegal campaign financing, concealment of em-bezzlement of public funds, and criminal association, which could result in a prison sentence of up to ten years. He has consistently denied any wrongdoing. The case was spurred in 2011 when Gadhafi's government reportedly funded Sarkozy's campaign. An alleged note from Libyan secret services suggested 50 million euros was provided, a claim Sarkozy has dismissed as a forgery. The trial includes 11 other defendants, among them three former ministers and Franco-Lebanese busi-nessman Ziad Takieddine, who is accused of acting as an intermediary but has fled to Lebanon.

The probe has also delved into potential witness tampering aimed at assisting Sarkozy. With pre-vious convictions in two other corruption cases, the outcome of this trial may have significant implications for Sarkozy's legacy. *—PTI*

B'desh issues 2nd arrest warrant against Hasina

DHAKA, 6 JAN

The International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) has issued arrest warrant against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 10 others, including her former Defence Adviser Major General (retired) Tarique Ahmed Sid-dique and former Inspector General of Police (IGP) Benazir Ahmed, according to a report by Daily Star.

The warrants relate to two cases involving allegations of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappear-ances.

The orders were issued by the tribunal, led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Majumdar, following two peti-tions filed by the prosecution seeking the arrest of the 11 individuals.

The tribunal has ordered the authorities to arrest and produce Sheikh Hasina and the others before it by 12 February, The Daily Star reported.

Hasina, has been living in India since 5 August, after fleeing Bangladesh following a massive protest that toppled her 16-year regime. Hasina is currently facing multiple court cases re-lated to fatalities during her rule, including accusations of crimes against humanity. *—ANI*

Sheikh Hasina PHOTO: PTI

US say New Orleans attacker travelled to Egypt, Canada

NEW ORLEANS, 6 JAN

US are investigating the potential significance of overseas trips made by the man responsible for driving a truck into New Year's revellers in New Orleans, law enforcement officials have said.

Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a US Army veteran who proclaimed his support for ISIL (ISIS) in videos posted online before the attack, visited Egypt and Canada in the summer of 2023, an FBI official said on Sunday.

"Our agents are getting answers as to where he went, whom he met with, how those trips may or may not tie into his actions in our city," Lyonel Myrthil, special agent in charge of the bureau's New Orleans field office, told reporters. *—Agencies*

A WAR AHEAD?

N Korea fires missile into Eastern Sea

SEOUL, 6 JAN

North Korea launched a ballistic missile on Monday that travelled 1,100kms before plunging into waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, according to South Korea's military. This latest test marks a continuation of heightened weapons activities just weeks before Donald Trump is set to return as US president.

The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff reported that the mid-range missile was fired from near Pyongyang and that launch preparations had been detected in advance by US and South Korean forces. The launch was condemned as a serious provocation threatening regional peace and stability. In response, military officials are ramping up surveillance and defence capabilities.

Japan's Defence Ministry confirmed that the missile landed outside its exclusive economic zone, with no damage reported to vessels or aircraft.

It coincided with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Seoul for discussions on the North Korean nuclear threat amid ongoing political instability in South Korea. This follows President Yoon Suk Yeol's brief martial law decree and subsequent impeachment last month, raising concerns about the implications for US-South Korea relations. *—PTI*

5 Indian-origin men charged with murder in US

LAS VEGAS, 6 JAN

Five men of Indian descent have been charged with murder in connection with the death of a 35-year-old Indian man, Kuldeep Kumar, in New Jersey. Sandeep Kumar, 34, from South Ozone Park, New York, faces charges of murder and conspiracy to commit murder related to the incident that occurred around 22 October, 2024, as stated by Ocean County Prosecutor Bradley Billhimer and New Jersey State Police Superintendent Colonel Patrick Callahan.

Kuldeep was reported missing by his family on 26 October, 2024. Kumar was apprehended on 3 January and is being held at Ocean County Jail. *—PTI*

A GOLDEN MOMENT

'Emilia Perez' sweeps top honours at 2025 Golden Globes

'Emilia Perez' actresses Adriana Paz, Selena Gomez, Zoe Saldana and Karla Sofia Gascon PHOTO: X

Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy: Emilia Pérez

Best Motion Picture – Animated: Flow

Best Motion Picture – Non-English Language: Emilia Pérez

Best Female and Male Actor for Musical or Comedy
Demi Moore, 'The Substance'
Sebastian Stan – 'A Different Man'

Best Female and Male Actor for TV Series – Drama
Anna Sawai, Shōgun
Hiroyuki Sanada - Shōgun

Best Male and Female Actor for TV series- Musical or Comedy
Jeremy Allen White, The Bear
Jean Smart, Hacks

Best Screenplay — Motion Picture
Peter Straughan, Conclave

Best Original Score — Motion Picture
Trent Reznor & Atticus Ross, Challengers

Best Original Song – Motion Picture
"El Mal," Emilia Pérez

Best Television Limited Series
'Baby Reindeer'

Best Female and Male actor in a Supporting Role in Movie
- Zoe Saldaña, "Emilia Pérez" — Winner
- Kieran Culkin, "A Real Pain" — Winner

Best Female and Male in a Supporting Role in Series
Jessica Gunning, 'Baby Reindeer'
Tadanobu Asano, 'Shōgun'

PAYAL KAPADIA'S 'ALL WE IMAGINE AS LIGHT' LOSES AT GOLDEN GLOBES

Payal Kapadia's 'All We Imagine as Light' on Monday failed to convert its two nominations at the 82nd Golden Globe Awards into wins as the film lost to 'Emilia Perez' in the Best Non-English Motion Picture Category and to Brady Corbet of 'The Bru-talist" fame in the Best Director segment. "All We Imagine As Light' may have missed at the Golden Globes, but the film has been on a winning streak at international platforms since it scripted history by becoming the first film from India to win the Grand Prix trophy at the Cannes Film Festi-val last year.

PHOTO: PTI

Gold slumps ₹700; silver rises ₹300

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Gold prices plunged Rs 700 to Rs 79,000 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal had ended at Rs 79,700 per 10 grams on Friday. However, silver prices rose from Rs 300 to Rs 90,700 per kg on Monday. The white metal settled at Rs 90,400 per kg in the previous session. The price of gold with 99.5 per cent purity declined Rs 700 to Rs 78,600 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 79,300 per 10 grams on Friday. In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for February delivery decreased Rs 247 or 0.32 per cent to Rs 77,070 per 10 grams. However, silver futures for March delivery appreciated Rs 479 or 0.54 per cent to Rs 89,700 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). —*PTI*

Rupee rises 11P to close at 85.68 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 6 JAN

The rupee pared its intraday losses and settled for the day on a positive note higher by 11 paise at 85.68 against the US dollar on Monday. Forex traders said the Reserve Bank of India's interventions aimed at stabilising the rupee, helped in restricting the decline in the local unit. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.77 and touched the lowest-ever level of 85.84 against the greenback in intraday trade. The unit pared the losses and finally settled for the day higher by 11 paise at 85.68 against the American currency. On Friday, the rupee depreciated 4 paise to close at 85.79 against the dollar. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.46 per cent lower at 108.45.—*PTI*

Govt mulls mandatory silver hallmarking

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday said the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) should consider implementing mandatory hallmarking for silver and silver artifacts following consumer demands. The government currently mandates hallmarking only for gold jewellery and artifacts, aimed at protecting consumer interests and ensuring product authenticity. The existing hallmarking system includes a unique six-digit alphanumeric code (HUID), which certifies gold purity. The potential extension to silver hallmarking would mark a significant expansion of India's precious metals quality control measures. —*PTI*

Mercedes-Benz appoints Emrah as CFO for India

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz on Monday said Emrah Ozer has been appointed as its Chief Financial Officer for its Indian operations as part of an organisational change in its finance and controlling function effective since 1 January, 2025. Ozer, currently associated as a Member of the Board of Management and Head of Finance & Controlling, Mercedes-Benz Otomotiv Turkey, will be inducted into the Board of Mercedes-Benz India as Executive Director in due course of time. Commenting on Ozer's appointment, Santosh Iyer, Managing Director & CEO, Mercedes-Benz India, said the company will benefit from his rich expertise in managing International Finance, business modelling and investor relations. —*PTI*

Sensex slumps over 1,250 pts on HMPV scare

Investors wealth tumbles Rs 10.98 lakh crore; 3,474 stocks declined while 656 advanced

MUMBAI, 6 JAN

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty crashed 1.6 per cent on Monday due to an across-the-board selloff, as concerns over third-quarter earnings growth and the continued flight of foreign capital sapped risk appetite.

Investors' wealth tumbled Rs 10.98 lakh crore on Monday as markets crashed due to across-the-board selloff amid concerns over third-quarter earnings growth and foreign fund exodus.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms dived Rs 10,98,723.54 crore to Rs 4,38,79,406.58 crore (USD 5.11 trillion).

As many as 3,474 stocks declined while 656 advanced and 114 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Besides, traders said that the new HMPV scare, depreciating rupee and weak trend in Asian markets further weighed on sentiment.

Extending loss for the second straight session, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 1,258.12 points or 1.59 per cent to close below the 78,000 level at 77,964.99. During the day, it plunged 1,441.49 points or 1.81 per cent to 77,781.62.

As many as 3,474 stocks declined, 656 advanced and 114 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The NSE Nifty slumped 388.70 points or 1.62 per cent to 23,616.05.

"Emerging markets are undergoing consolidation due to uncertainties surrounding new US economic policies, the Fed's hawkish stance on future rate cuts, potential upward revision for CY25 inflation, and a strong dollar, all of which are negatively impacting market sentiment.

The primary catalyst for a sharp sell-off in the domestic market appears to be concerns over the human metapneumovirus (HMPV).

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Tata Steel, NTPC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, IndusInd Bank, Power Grid, Zomato, Adani Ports, Asian Paints, Mahindra & Mahindra and Reliance Industries were among biggest laggards. —*PTI*

NSE Nifty slumps 388.70 points to 23,616.05 PHOTO: X

'Sensex could give return of 18% by Dec'

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

BSE Sensex is projected to register an 18 per cent gain by December 2025, according to a report by Morgan Stanley. The report highlighted a positive outlook for India's equity market, driven by strong macroeconomic stability, fiscal consolidation, and increased private investments.

It said "18 per cent upside to BSE Sensex to Dec-25 in base case, we assume continuation in India's gains in macro stability via fiscal consolidation, increased private investment and a positive gap between real growth and real rates".

PHOTO:X

The report added with strong earnings, macro stability and domestic flows, it is hard to argue against India's investment case. —*PTI*

ITC SHARES ADJUST AFTER HOTELS BIZ DEMERGER

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

ITC shares settled at Rs 455.60 on the NSE at the end of a special session on Monday for the price discovery of its hotels business.

At the BSE, it settled at Rs 455. Demerger of ITC's hotel business came into effect from 1 January, 2025, and the record date for shareholders was 6 January, 2025.

As per the scheme, ITC Hotel is separated from the parent entity.

"Most-awaited ITC demerger gets price discovery at Rs 455.60 and Rs 27 adjusted towards ITC Hotel based on previous closing during the special pre-open session. Discovery price of ITC Hotel was in-line with our expectations.

"Now ITC shareholders get 1 share of ITC Hotels for every 10 held of ITC.

The BSE and NSE conducted a special trading session to discover the price for ITC hotels business post demerger.

As per the demerger scheme, ITC shareholders whose names will appear in the list of shareholders on January 6 will receive "one share of ITC Hotels for every 10 shares of ITC", according to a regulatory filing from the Kolkata-based conglomerate on 31 December, 2024. —*PTI*

Airtel, Voda Idea sell entire stake in Firefly to iBus for ₹9 cr

MUMBAI, 6 JAN

Telecom operators Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea have sold their entire stake in Wi-Fi infrastructure company Firefly Networks to iBus Network and Infrastructure for Rs 9 crore, the telcos said in separate regulatory filings on Monday.

FireFly Networks Limited is a 50-50 joint venture between Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel Limited.

"Bharti Airtel Limited has entered into a Share Purchase Agreement with iBus Network and Infrastructure Private Limited for transfer of Company's entire stake (50 per cent) in Firefly Networks Limited," Airtel said in a filing.

The deal is expected to close within 30 business days from the date of execution of the agreement between the firms.

"The Company will receive Rs 45 million for the sale of its entire stake (50 per cent) held in Firefly," Vodafone Idea said in a separate filing.

Firefly manages and monetises Wi-Fi hotspots by providing the best Wi-Fi infrastructure to partners like educational institutes, hospitals, malls, cafes, public hangouts and markets, transit points and corporate parks across the major Indian cities.

Backed by marquee investors like the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund and International Finance Corporation, iBUS Network and Infrastructure specialises in providing in-building telecom network solutions and Wi-Fi managed services. —*PTI*

FireFly Networks Limited is a 50-50 joint venture between Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel Limited PHOTO: X

EPFO, TAX EXEMPTION IN FOCUS

FM holds pre-budget talks with trade unions

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, chaired the eighth Pre-Budget Consultation meeting with stakeholders and representatives from trade unions on Monday. The discussion was held in connection with the preparation of the Union Budget 2025-26.

The consultations focused on understanding the perspectives of trade unions regarding the upcoming budget. This interaction is part of the government's annual pre-budget tradition, aimed at gathering inputs from diverse sectors to shape policies and allocate resources effectively.

Trade Unions on Monday pressed for increasing minimum EPFO pension 5 times to Rs 5,000 per month, immediate constitution of the 8th Pay Commission and higher taxes on super rich in the upcoming 2025-26 Budget.

In their customary pre-budget meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, trade union leaders also demanded an increase in income tax exemption limit to Rs 10 lakh per annum, social security scheme for gig workers, and restoration of old pension scheme (OPS) for government employees.

Talking to reporters after the meeting TUCC National General Secretary S P Tiwari said the government should stop all privatisation and corporatisation of PSUs and impose an additional 2 per cent tax on super rich to fund social security for informal workers. Budget for 2025-26 will be tabled on 1 February, 2025.The 2025-26 Budget will mark Nirmala Sitharaman's eighth. —*ANI / PTI*

IEX trades record 11,132 million units in Dec 2024

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

The Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) announced a remarkable achievement in December, with electricity traded volumes reaching a record 11,132 million units (MU), marking a 29 per cent increase year-on-year. The exchange also recorded a significant uptick in renewable energy certificates (RECs), trading 16.62 lakh certificates, a rise of 58 per cent compared to the previous year.

For the first nine months of fiscal year 2025, IEX's total traded electricity volume stood at 88,981 MU, reflecting a 19 per cent annual growth. In the third quarter alone, the exchange reported a volume of 30,464 MU, representing a 16 per cent increase year-on-year. The Day Ahead Market (DAM) boosted supply, resulting in an average clearing price dropping to Rs 3.89 per unit, a 14 per cent decline from last year. —*PTI*

NCLAT to hear Meta's penalty plea on 16 Jan

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Meta Platforms Inc on Monday moved corporate appellate tribunal NCLAT against the order passed by fair trade regulator CCI, which imposed a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore for abuse of its dominant position.

The petition was mentioned before a National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) bench which also comprised its Chairperson Justice Ashok Bhushan.

Senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Mukul Rohatgi appearing for Meta requested for an urgent hearing in the matter considering the importance and nature of the matter.

A three-member bench, which also consisted of technical members Barun Mitra and Arun Baroka, directed listing the petition on January 16 for hearing.

On 18 November, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) had imposed a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore on social media major Meta for unfair business ways with respect to WhatsApp privacy policy update done in 2021.

The regulator has called for implementing various remedial measures, including barring WhatsApp from sharing data collected on its platform with other Meta companies or Meta company products for advertising purposes for five years. —*PTI*

PHOTO:PTI

Cipla rolls out mobile app for asthma screening

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Drug firm Cipla on Monday said it has launched a mobile application designed to enable the first line of screening for asthma in India. According to the Global Burden of Disease report, the total burden of asthma in India is estimated to be around 34.3 million. India has a three-fold higher mortality rate and two-fold higher asthma-associated disability burden compared to the global proportion. This can be attributed, in part, to the underdiagnosis and undertreatment of asthma. The mobile application -- CipAir will be available on Android and will be subsequently rolled out on iOS devices, the company stated. —*PTI*

Govt sets 8.19% return for jute bag supplies

KOLKATA, 6 JAN

Indian jute mills will earn an 8.19-per cent "return on capital" for supplying jute bags for foodgrain packaging under the newly approved pricing framework by the Ministry of Textiles, a senior official said.

This implies that mills will earn the predetermined percentage of profit on the capital invested, regardless of market fluctuations of input costs, he said.

According to the Indian Jute Mills Association, the new pricing formula will result in only a 4-5 per cent increase in the price of gunny sack supplies.

PHOTO:PIXABAY

In contrast, the Office of the Jute Commissioner estimates the pricing benefit to be between 6 per cent and 8 per cent, considering various other modifications made in the new pricing policy following the Tariff Commission recommendations.

The new pricing formula will be applied retrospectively from September 2016.

Raghavendra Gupta of the Indian Jute Mills Association said the pricing is dynamic with a lot of variables, and it will depend on several factors.

Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh, during a recent visit to Kolkata, had said the new pricing will also benefit other stakeholders – around 4 lakh jute mill workers and 40 lakh farmer families engaged in its cultivation – primarily in West Bengal. He had also said this year's sale of jute products is expected to cross Rs 14,000 crore. —*PTI*

FOR NEXT GEN INNOVATORS

Accel unveils $650M fund for Indian startups

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Leading global venture capital firm Accel has announced the launch of a $650 million early-stage fund aimed at fostering the next generation of innovative startups in India and Southeast Asia. The fund will focus on the rapidly evolving sectors of artificial intelligence (AI), consumer goods, fintech, and manufacturing.

Accel, known for being the first institutional investor in 80 per cent of its portfolio companies, already boasts well-known names such as Flipkart, Swiggy, and Freshworks. With this new fund, its eighth focused on India and Southeast Asia, Accel aims to partner with audacious founders to create impactful, category-defining businesses.

Investment areas of interest include platforms leveraging AI and large language models, as well as Services as Software firms that utilise India's IT services capabilities. In the consumer space, Accel is targeting startups addressing the needs of India's affluent households and the growing disposable income of the Gen Z demographic.

The fintech segment will include companies offering personalised wealth advisory services and those enhancing digital financial product distribution. Additionally, the fund will back manufacturing startups responding to the global demand for diverse supply chains and those enhancing factory operations through digital technologies.

Accel's partner, Prayank Swaroop, expressed confidence in India's growth trajectory, noting that the country is poised for significant GDP growth over the next decade. Accel seeks to be a crucial partner to entrepreneurs ready to innovate and meet the demands of a shifting market landscape.

With a solid track record in the region, Accel continues to invest in initiatives that streamline the startup journey, exemplified by their community platform SeedToScale and the Accel Atoms scaling programme. —*PTI*

The fund will focus on the rapidly evolving sectors of artificial intelligence (AI), consumer goods, fintech, and manufacturing PHOTO: X

- In the consumer space, Accel is targeting startups addressing the needs of India's affluent households and the growing disposable income of the Gen Z demographic

Standard Glass Lining IPO fully subscribed in minutes

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

The initial public offering (IPO) of Standard Glass Lining Technology Ltd was fully subscribed within minutes of its launch on Monday. The public issue attracted bids for 6,70,40,315 shares against the 2,08,29,567 shares available, reflecting a subscription ratio of 3.22 times, according to data from the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) showed strong interest, with their portion subscribed 4.47 times, while the non-institutional investors' quota was also robust at 4.42 times.

Last Friday, Standard Glass Lining announced it had secured Rs 123 crore from anchor investors. With a price band set between Rs 133-140 per share, the IPO will remain open until 8 January. The total issue size is Rs 410.05 crore, comprising Rs 210 crore from fresh equity shares and an Offer For Sale (OFS) of up to 1.43 crore shares sold by promoters and other stakeholders.

PHOTO:X

Proceeds from the fresh issue will be allocated towards debt repayment (Rs 130 crore), investment in its wholly-owned subsidiary, S2 Engineering Industry (Rs 30 crore), and various other corporate purposes, including strategic acquisitions and machinery purchases.

Standard Glass Lining Technology provides tailored solutions to pharmaceutical and chemical manufacturers. —*PTI*

Rishi Dhawan retires from domestic cricket

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Former India all-rounder Rishi Dhawan has announced his retirement from domestic limited-over tournaments after the conclusion of the group stage matches of the Vijay Hazare Trophy. Dhawan, who played three ODIs and a T20I for India in 2016, took the decision after Himachal Pradesh failed to advance to the knockout stages of the tournament. However, the 34-year-old will be available for selection for the remainder of the Ranji Trophy season, starting from 23 January. Dhawan, who had led Himachal to their only Hazare title in 2021-22, had a middling run this year, making 196 runs in seven matches at an average of 39.20 with a solitary fifty. A brisk medium pacer, Dhawan took eight wickets from seven matches this season. "From humble beginnings to representing my nation on the grandest stages, it has been a privilege beyond measure. Cricket has been my passion, and my reason for waking up every morning," he said.—*PTI*

Odisha to sponsor Kho Kho team for 3 years

BHUBANESWAR, 6 JAN

The Odisha government on Monday announced a three-year sponsorship deal for the Indian national kho kho team, marking a significant step forward in promoting indigenous sports in the country. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said the state will invest Rs 5 crore annually from January 2025 to December 2027, with funding provided through the Odisha Mining Corporation. The total sponsorship package of Rs 15 crore demonstrates Odisha's continued commitment to sports development, following its successful partnership with Indian hockey. This initiative aims to elevate Kho Kho's status and provide essential support to the national team. —*PTI*

West Indies arrives for 1st Test in Pak in 18 years

KARACHI, 6 JAN

The West Indies cricket team arrived in Islamabad on Monday for their first Test series in Pakistan in 18 years. The West Indies last toured Pakistan for a Test series in 2006 though they have been to the country for two white-ball rubbers in between. The visitors will play a three-day tour game against Pakistan Shaheens from January 10 in Islamabad before the first Test in Multan from 17 January. The second Test is scheduled from25 January at the same venue. The series will conclude their assignments in the current cycle of the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) with both teams finishing in the lower half off the points table. —*PTI*

Kiran Jadhav wins air rifle gold in Lakshya Cup

MUMBAI, 6 JAN

Kiran Jadhav of Navy outclassed fancied names in the fray to bag the 10m air-rifle gold in the 15th Lakshya Cup invitational tournament here. The 29-year-old Jadhav totalled 251.7 points to emerge victorious for the first time after consistently making the final every year since 2018. Jadhav pipped Gajanan Khandagale of Maharashtra, who tallied 250.9, to the second place while Mohit Gowda, also of Maharashtra, finished third with 229.3 points. Paris Olympics finalist Arjun Babuta of Railways was the favourite to win the title here but he ended up at fourth with 208.2 points. However, reigning men's and women's national air rifle champions, Shahu Mane and Ananya Naidu, failed to qualify for the finals. Mane of Railways shot 629.0 and 626.4 points, respectively in the qualification rounds. —*PTI*

Hurt Bumrah to miss England series

His injury is believed to be linked to an intense workload

SYDNEY, 6 JAN

Jasprit Bumrah, India's premier pace bowler, is expected to miss a significant portion of the upcoming white-ball series against England as he recovers from back spasms, a precautionary measure ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy commencing on 19 February.

Bumrah, who excelled in the recently concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy, where he took 32 wickets, was unable to bowl during the final innings due to back issues. The 30-year-old bowler's injury is believed to be linked to an intense workload, having bowled over 150 overs throughout the series.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is closely monitoring his condition, recognising that Bumrah's presence is crucial to India's chances in the tournament. As of now, the severity of his injury remains undetermined.

If it is classified as a Grade 1 spasm, Bumrah could require two to three weeks of rehabilitation before being cleared to play. A Grade 2 injury might extend recovery to six weeks, while a Grade 3 injury, the most severe, could sideline him for a minimum of three months.

Bumrah's absence from the upcoming T20I series was anticipated since it is not a World Cup year, but with the Champions Trophy approaching, he was expected to feature in at least two of the three ODIs against England. His fitness will be assessed ahead of the final match scheduled for 12 February in Ahmedabad.

India is set to play England in five T20Is and three ODIs beginning 22 January. —*PTI*

Concerns loom over India's bowling

SYDNEY, 6 JAN

Following India's disappointing performance in the Border-Gavaskar series, scrutiny has shifted from the underwhelming batting to a more pressing issue: the lack of depth in the bowling department. While the future of Test veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli hangs in the balance, bolstered batting options seem promising should they decide to step down.

However, India's fast bowling resources appear alarmingly sparse. With Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, and Ishant Sharma at the forefront, finding replacements for this accomplished trio poses a significant challenge. Bumrah's fitness emerged as a concern during the final Test, as he was unable to bowl owing to back spasms, highlighting the urgency to cultivate fresh talent.

- Although Mohammed Siraj has played 36 Tests, he has yet to prove himself as a game-changer. Emerging bowlers like Akash Deep and Mukesh Kumar lack extensive exposure at the top level.

Although Mohammed Siraj has played 36 Tests, he has yet to prove himself as a game-changer. Emerging bowlers like Akash Deep and Mukesh Kumar lack extensive exposure at the top level, while the current domestic circuit offers limited fast bowling prospects. Left-arm seamers, in particular, are in short supply, with Arshdeep Singh and Yash Dayal yet to make a significant impact.

On the batting front, however, a wealth of talent awaits selection. Promising players such as B Sai Sudharsan, Devdutt Padikkal, and seasoned contenders like Ruturaj Gaikwad and Shreyas Iyer may stake their claims post-Ranji Trophy. Decisions regarding elevations will be made after the domestic season, with India's next red-ball challenge in England scheduled for June. —*PTI*

ICC, BCCI, CA to explore 2 -tier Test cricket

1SYDNEY, 6 JAN

The International Cricket Council (ICC), in collaboration with the cricket boards of India, Australia, and England, is considering a two-tier Test system designed to facilitate more series between the leading cricket nations. The Age reports that ICC Chairman Jay Shah is scheduled to meet with Cricket Australia Chair Mike Baird and England's Richard Thompson later this month to discuss the proposal, which would likely be implemented after the current Future Tours Programme concludes in 2027.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is preparing for its Special General Meeting on 12 January in Mumbai, where interim secretary Devajit Saikia is expected to be appointed as the full-time

Jay Shah **PHOTO: PTI**

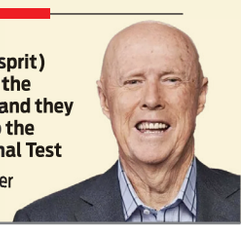
secretary. A BCCI official stated that while discussions about a two-tier system had taken place in 2016, they remain uncertain about current developments. Opposition to the proposal from the BCCI, along with cricket boards from Zimbabwe and Bangladesh, previously centred on concerns over reduced revenue and the potential disadvantages for smaller cricketing nations, which could miss out on matches against top teams. —*PTI*

"There is a superstar culture which has developed. We don't need superstars, we need performers. If the team has them (performers), it will move forward. Whoever wants to become a superstar should stay at home and play cricket there

-Harbhajan Singh, former India spinner

"They (Aus) couldn't bring down (Jasprit) Bumrah. He was too good. But then the baton was passed to Rohit Sharma and they brought him down straight away, to the extent that he withdrew from the final Test

-Kerry O'Keeffe, former spinner



CAPTAIN KAUR RESTED

The Indian team approaches the series against Ireland on a winning streak **PHOTO: BCCI**

Mandhana to lead India in ODI series against Ireland

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

In a significant development for Indian women's cricket, prolific opener Smriti Mandhana has been appointed captain for the upcoming three-match home ODI series against Ireland, set to begin on 10 January in Rajkot. Regular skipper Harmanpreet Kaur will be rested for the series due to ongoing injury concerns.

Alongside Kaur, fast bowler Renuka Singh Thakur will also be given a break, as announced by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). Harmanpreet sustained a knee injury during last month's home series against the West Indies, missing the final two T20 Internationals before returning for three ODIs. She had previously dealt with a neck injury during the Women's T20 World Cup against Pakistan last October.

Renuka, who was the player of the series against the West Indies after claiming 10 wickets in three ODIs, is being rested to manage her workload, considering her past struggles with a back stress fracture.

The Indian team approaches the series against Ireland on a winning streak, having recently secured their first home T20 International series triumph in five years by defeating the West Indies 2-1. Mandhana showcased excellent form during this assignment, scoring three consecutive half-centuries in T20s and two fifties in the subsequent ODIs.

The squad for the series includes: Smriti Mandhana (C), Deepti Sharma (VC), Pratika Rawal, Harleen Deol, Jemimah Rodrigues, Uma Chetry (wk), Richa Ghosh (wk), Tejal Hasabnis, Raghvi Bist, Minnu Mani, Priya Mishra, Tanuja Kanwer, Titas Sadhu, Saima Thakor, and Sayali Satghare. —*PTI*

Adelaide Int'l: Sriram, Reyes advance

NEW DELHI, 6 JAN

Indian doubles team N Sriram Balaji and Miguel Reyes-Varela progressed to the pre-quarterfinals of the Adelaide International, while fellow countryman Sumit Nagal faced an early exit at the Auckland ASB Classic on Monday.

The Indo-Mexican pairing of Balaji and Reyes-Varela made a stunning comeback to defeat Rohan Bopanna and his Colombian partner Nicolas Barrientos, clinching the match 4-6, 6-2, 10-7. Bopanna, who recently ended his two-year partnership with Australia's Matthew Ebden to team up with Barrientos ahead of the Australian Open, displayed an impressive 81 per cent first-serve rate, winning 76 per cent of those points.

After a rocky start that saw them drop the first set, Balaji and Reyes-Varela turned the tide in the second, exploiting

The Indo-Mexican pairing of Balaji and Reyes-Varela made a stunning comeback **PHOTO: X**

their opponents' faltering serve to dominate. Their aggressive gameplay helped them break serve multiple times, leading to a tense tiebreak in which they showcased remarkable composure before sealing victory in one hour and 15 minutes. They will face the fourth-seeded Finnish-British pair of Harri Heliovaara and Henry Patten in the last-16. Meanwhile, Nagal put up a commendable fight against US player Alex Michelsen, ultimately losing 7-6 (8), 4-6, 2-6 after a grueling two-hour, 40-minute match. —*PTI*

GAUFF LEADS USA TO UNITED CUP VICTORY

SYDNEY, 6 JAN

Coco Gauff delivered a stellar performance, defeating second-ranked Iga Swiatek 6-4, 6-4 in the opening singles match of the United Cup mixed teams tennis event, propelling the United States to a 2-0 victory over Poland in the final on Sunday.

In the deciding match, Taylor Fritz secured the title for the Americans with a hard-fought win against Hubert Hurkacz, emerging victorious 6-4, 5-7, 7-6 (4) at the Ken Rosewall Arena. This triumph marks the second United Cup title for the United States in just three years.

Expressing her delight, Gauff remarked, "It's great to win a team event, the only team event I've ever won, so I'm super excited." —*PTI*

Eyes on Satwik-Chirag for strong start in Malaysia Open

KUALA LUMPUR, 6 JAN

India's doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will aim for a strong result, Lakshya Sen will look to build on his recent form and HS Prannoy will hope to shake off rust after a lengthy break at the season-opening Malaysia Super 1000 tournament starting here on Tuesday.

For Satwik and Chirag, seeded seventh, this USD 1.45 million event marks the start of a new season like it did in 2024.

Last year, although they narrowly missed out on the title, the pairing went on to reach three more finals, winning two of them. The Asian Games gold medallists were in exceptional form and will be hoping to replicate that success this year. —*PTI*

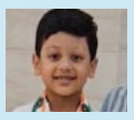
Six-year-old Reyansh Khamkar swims his way into record books

THANE, 6 JAN

Reyansh Khamkar, a six-year-old from Thane, has etched his name in the record books by becoming the youngest swimmer to complete a challenging 15-kilometer stretch in the sea.

He swam from Malpe Jetty to Waghotan Jetty in Vijaydurg in an impressive three hours, the achievement earning him recognition from the India Book of Records.

Reyansh, who is trained by coach Kailash Akhade at Starfish Sports Foundation,



completed the feat in his first-ever sea swimming competition, attracting attention for his remarkable stamina and skill at such a young age. Last year, Reyansh clinched gold, silver, and bronze medals in various competitions, including the prestigious state-level swimming event held in Thane, where he won the top prize in the 25-metre butterfly with fins and a bronze in the 50-metre freestyle. —*PTI*

2 ON 2 DRAW

Diallo helps ManU seal draw against Liverpool

LIVERPOOL, 6 JAN

Amad Diallo came back to haunt Liverpool with a late equalizer that secured a 2-2 draw for Manchester United against Premier League leader Liverpool.

The forward turned home Alejandro Garnacho's cross in the 80th minute at Anfield after Mohamed Salah's penalty had looking like giving Liverpool the win on Sunday.

Diallo struck at the end of extra time as United beat Liverpool 4-3 in a dramatic FA Cup clash last season and hit a 90th-minute winner against Manchester City last month.

His goal on Sunday was only worth a point on this occasion, but it halted United's four-game losing run and prevented fierce

The draw saw united move up to 13th in the standings **PHOTO: PTI**

rival Liverpool from opening up an eight-point lead at the top of the standings.

United head coach Ruben Amorim, however, was still unhappy.

"It's a point, a deserved point, but it's just one point, and we should get mad. WToday we should be really disappointed," he said.

United led through Lisandro Martinez's strike in the 52nd, but Cody Gakpo leveled seven minutes later.

Salah fired Liverpool ahead from the spot in the 70th after Matthijs de Ligt handled in the box.

The draw saw united move up to 13th in the standings.

Liverpool missed the chance to open up an eight-point lead on second-place Arsenal, which drew 1-1 with Brighton on Saturday. It is still six points clear at the top with a game in hand.

"Over the whole game we created more chances than them; a point feels like it's something to take, but when I watch the game back I would hope for more," Liverpool head coach Arne Slot said. —*PTI*

Indonesia fires coach ahead of World Cup

JAKARTA, 6 JAN

Indonesia has dismissed **Shin Tae-yong** as head coach of its national team, the country's federation announced on Monday.

"This decision was made based on long and mature considerations and evaluations carried out by as a whole regarding the team's performance and the long-term goals that the Indonesian National Football Team wants to achieve" the Indonesian federation, known locally as PSSI, said in a statement.

Appointed in 2020, the South Korean boss had led Indonesia to the third round of qualification for the 2026 World Cup for the first time. In November, the team defeated Saudi Arabia 2-0 to move into third place in the six-team group with four games remaining.

At a press conference in Jakarta, PSSI chairman Erick Thohir, who handed Shin a contract extension to 2027 last June, explained the decision.

"The dynamics of the national team need special attention from us," Thohir said. "We see the need for a leader who can better implement strategies agreed upon by the players, good communication and better implementation."

There was no announcement of a replacement, though there is speculation that the new boss could be European. —*PTI*